

Spring 2013

explore, Spring 2013, Vol. 16: Sacred texts in the public sphere

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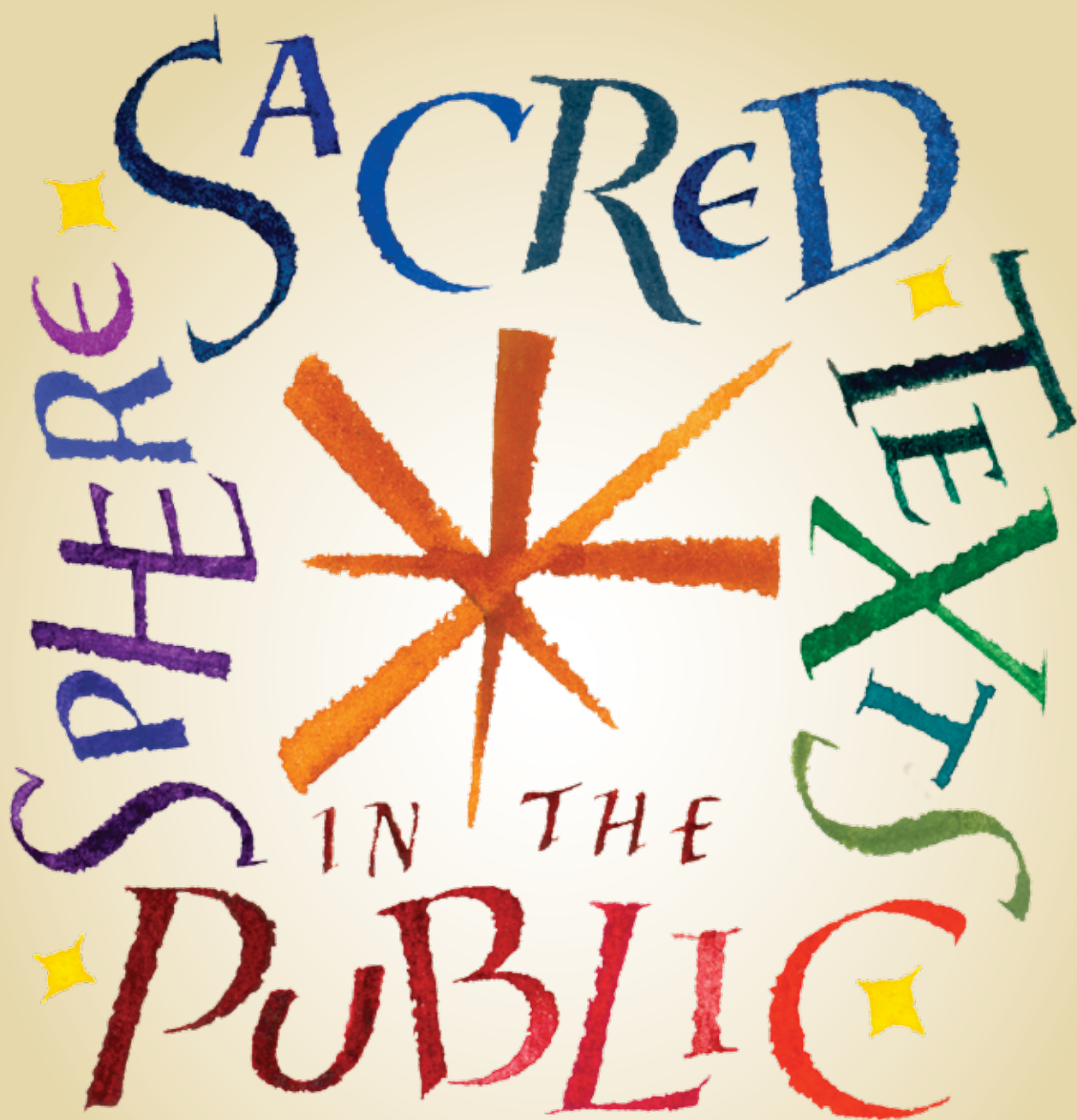
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explore

PUBLISHED BY THE IGNATIAN CENTER AT SANTA CLARA UNIVERSITY

EXPLORING THE
INTEGRATION OF FAITH,
JUSTICE, AND THE
INTELLECTUAL LIFE
IN JESUIT, CATHOLIC
HIGHER EDUCATION

SPRING 2013 VOL. 16



7 Sacred Text,
Sacred Space

22 Interpreting and Embodying
Sacred Texts in the Public
Sphere: A Photo Essay

32 An Oddly Satisfying
Sacred Text

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SPRING 2013

EXPLORING THE INTEGRATION OF FAITH,
JUSTICE, AND THE INTELLECTUAL LIFE
IN JESUIT, CATHOLIC HIGHER EDUCATION

Michael C. McCarthy, S.J. '87
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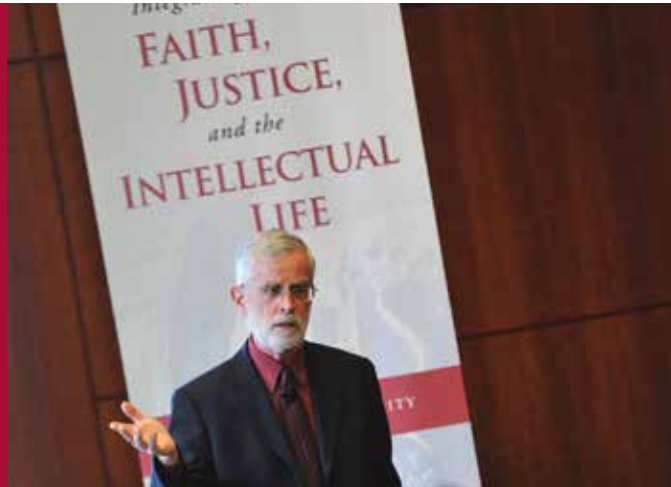
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Charles Barry

Emory Law Professor Michael Perry lectures on "The Universal Declaration of Human Rights as a Sacred Text" at this year's Bannan Institute, March 2013. Right: Meg Hitchcock, *Song of the Everfree: The Avadhuta Gita*, 2011; Letters cut from "The Joyful Path of Good Fortune" by Geshe Kelsang Gyatso.*

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* Captions in this issue marked with an asterisk indicate that piece of art was featured in *Dialoguing with Sacred Texts: An Exhibit of Sacred Texts Past, Present, and Future* sponsored by the Ignatian Center for Jesuit Education and Archives and Special Collections, Santa Clara University, in 2013.

ON THE COVER: Artwork by Georgia Deaver (1957-2013), calligrapher, illustrator, artist, and teacher. The Ignatian Center is grateful for Georgia Deaver's artistic contribution and spirited vision. May she rest in peace.

Sacred Texts as Mirror and Medicine: Introduction to Spring 2013 *explore*

BY MICHAEL C. MCCARTHY, S.J. '87

*Executive Director, Ignatian Center for Jesuit Education,
Edmund Campion, S.J., University Professor, Santa Clara University*



Charles Barry

In the ancient Christian tradition, Scripture was characterized as both mirror and medicine. Thinkers such as Athanasius of Alexandria and Augustine of Hippo would urge their fellow Christians to see themselves in passages of the Bible, to make their own the story they read about and to recognize that it was, after all, their family story.

But Scripture was not just a mirror; it was medicine too. If one looked long enough or deeply enough, Scripture had the power to transform us the way we needed. It could heal us. For instance, if anxious, we would be soothed to trust by the words “The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.” And the examples of so many people in the “great cloud of witnesses” could encourage us with their lives. David provided an example of repentance when he sinned; Mary a model of trust and courage; Jesus an effective sign of generosity and God’s self-giving love to us.

This year, the Santa Clara University community has witnessed amazing energy around the 2012-13 Bannan Institute on “Sacred Texts in the Public Sphere.” Literally thousands of people, both from the University community and beyond, have gathered to reflect on how sacred texts of multiple traditions move us, change us, inspire us, even trouble us.

This current issue of *explore* is a testimony to the power of sacred texts to serve as both mirror and medicine. As mirror, they reflect tremendous qualities of our community; as medicine they draw us closer to divine qualities to which we, as a community, aspire—such as kindness, justice, fidelity, and love. In his essay on God’s command to Abraham to leave his country, beloved English Professor Jeffrey Zorn ponders the journey from an all-Jewish upbringing in the Roxbury-Dorchester neighborhood in Boston to a long and fruitful career at a Jesuit, Catholic university. In an article co-authored by two Jewish and Baptist colleagues in the SCU Law School, Stephanie Wildman and Deborah Moss-West explain how God’s commands in Leviticus and Deuteronomy inspire their work: “Justice, justice you shall pursue.”

Our distinguished graduate Maggi Van Dorn '08 explores mystical texts from a range of religious traditions that moved her to encounter God more and more as “the Tender One,” who can speak in ways as intimate as a writer of love letters. This piece leads nicely to an essay by current Santa Clara University student, Seher Siddiquee, on the patient study of the Qur’an, culminating in a response celebrating the blessings of God: “Then which of the favors of your Lord will ye deny?”

We are happy to welcome to the SCU community Fr. Thomas Massaro, S.J., the new Dean of the Jesuit School of Theology of Santa Clara University. He challenges our concept of “Sacred Texts” by turning to a little-known document issued by the International Commission on the Apostolate of Jesuit Education in 1986. At the center of the document are 28 bullet points, which outline, in a very direct and convincing way, the characteristics of Jesuit Education. Among these “marks” of Jesuit Education is that it is world-affirming and “serves the faith that does justice.”

Ironically, in the same year that this document was published, Professor Sukhmander Singh joined the faculty of Santa Clara’s School of Engineering. Initially worried that, as a Sikh, he would not belong at a Jesuit, Catholic university, soon he found himself very much at home here. What is marvelous to me about his essay is that he uses Sikh scriptures, the Guru Granth Sahib, as the basis for understanding why his presence at a Catholic institution is so right: “‘O Nanak, He Himself creates [people] and makes them different. Who shall we say is bad for all have the same Master.’” And this is an extraordinarily important point. The fact that we may come from different religious traditions does not require us to check in our commitments at the door. It does not mean that we hide our faith lest we impose it on others. Rather, we allow each other to be different. That mutual generosity is as liberating for those members of the Santa Clara University who live out their Christian faith as it is for the Sikh professor (or any other member of the community) who exercises his or her vocation at a Catholic institution.

Finally, in a moving letter to his twin daughters, Lester Deanes from the Office of Student Life, reflects on aspects of Martin Luther King’s 1963 “Letter from Birmingham Jail,” which still echoes fifty years later at Santa Clara University. Mr. Deanes provides a convincing case for MLK’s letter as both mirror and medicine.

The lead article of this year’s *explore* is written by the distinguished Jesuit scholar, Daniel A. Madigan of Georgetown University. Fr. Madigan has spent most of his academic life dedicated to deepening the understanding between Christians and Muslims. His essay comprises a fine discussion on how texts of multiple traditions function as sacred texts, how interpretation of such texts is a complex task, and how in the end, through our encounter with sacred texts we are guests of the divine Word.

Let me thank these writers for their excellent articles, as well as all those who have contributed to and participated in the many events that have made up the 2012-13 Bannan Institute. In particular, I am deeply grateful to

The fact that we may come from different religious traditions does not require us to check in our commitments at the door. It does not mean that we hide our faith lest we impose it on others. Rather, we allow each other to be different.

staff members of the Ignatian Center for Jesuit Education who have launched such a successful program: Susan Chun, Margaret Glomb, Michael Nuttall, and most especially Theresa Ladrigan-Whelpley, our Director of Institutes and Spirituality.

From conception to execution, this year’s institute has been a work of extraordinary care and grace. I have every confidence that Fr. Lou Bannan, S.J., whose family founded the Bannan Institute in his honor to promote the distinctively Jesuit, Catholic tradition of education at SCU, is exceedingly proud. ☐



Ahmed Moustafa. *Where the Oceans Meet* (detail), ca. 1997. Inspired by Qur'an 55:19–21. Oil and watercolor on special handmade paper from pure cotton, 638 gsm. 200 x 162 cm. Printed with permission.

Sacred Text, Sacred Space

How Closed Texts Open to Infinity



Courtesy of Daniel Madigan, S.J.

BY DANIEL A. MADIGAN, S.J.

*Associate Professor, Department of
Theology, Georgetown University*

THERE ARE FEW THINGS THAT ACADEMICS LIKE BETTER THAN TEXTS, PARTICULARLY THOSE OF US WHO WORK IN THE HUMANITIES. WE PRODUCE THEM AND PRESCRIBE THEM FOR OUR STUDENTS; WE COLLECT AND TRANSLATE, ANALYZE AND GLOSS THEM. Since the rise of post-modernism, we seem to have been in a constant pother about the nature of “the text,” yet somehow that has not prevented us from carrying on our typically modern affair with texts. Who could imagine a university—Jesuit, Catholic, or whatever—without them? Even if we are in the sciences, whether “hard” or “soft,” we digest our findings into what we hope will be published texts. And though we may have advanced from warehousing those texts on shelves to storing them on servers where they can be almost limitlessly available, they still seem so comfortingly objective because they are there for anyone to consult and verify.

Given this predilection for texts in university education, sacred texts run the risk of just being subsumed under that broad category and of losing their particularity. Texts become sacred, not because of any inherent literary property, but because communities of faith have come to consider them so. They have *canonized* them. That is to say, they have recognized that a certain particular text or group of texts somehow express truth and so make a particular claim on them. We could say that it is the sacredness of the human person that demands we take these texts seriously in the academy. It is respect for the believers that is the basis for our respectful approach to the text. Recognizing the importance of these texts for the communities for whom they are sacred is the reason we take them seriously, not only in theology or religious studies, but in political science and history, in psychology and sociology.

The claim that people sense the text making on them may not be a normative claim, even

when the texts in question are legal texts—think of the relationship of the Christian community or, perhaps even more surprisingly, that of the rabbis to the letter of the written Law (Torah).¹ Think, too, of the attitude of Hindu sages to the animal sacrifices of the Vedas. However, the claim the sacred texts make is at the very least what we might call *formative*. That is, these texts are an essential element in the complex process of forming the identity of the faith community.² We could say that the community's identity is formed in the space the text creates—in this sense, the text is a locus for the community rather more than a blueprint; the world of the text is the space of divine communication rather than the sum total of it. Sacred texts are not merely (sometimes not at all) informative; they are *performative*. They enact the relationship within which the believing community hears the divine word. Take the reading of the first creation account in the book of Genesis at the beginning of the Easter Vigil: it serves not to provide information about the origins of our planet and its various species, but rather to establish in that moment a space in which the creative word and work of God and the human

relatedness as God's "image and likeness" are recognized and made real.

Recognizing this distinction between normative and formative modes of canonicity is essential, particularly when approaching sacred texts not our own. A contemporary example might illuminate this: anti-Muslim polemicists are fond of pointing to various Qur'anic injunctions—for example, the verse about the possibility of beating a recalcitrant wife (Q 4:34) or the command to amputate the hands of thieves (Q 5:38)—in order to discredit the scripture and hence the religion as a whole. The text seems to promise a reliably independent source of insight into the faith of the community that acknowledges its authority. Whatever they might say of themselves, since their foundational texts are available, believers' claims can be checked against them for accuracy. Polemicists brandish these verses and insist they must be normative, using them to discredit other voices, who are judged to be hiding the true horror of their religion. Yet those very same people can happily carry a Bible that still insists on the extermination of the Amalekites, even down to the babies at the breast, in revenge



Torah Scroll, 18th Century, Courtesy of Eric Chaim Kline.

Indeed, the most complex thing about scriptures is the way in which these clearly delimited texts relate to limitless truth; how these culturally specific and often historically particular texts relate to a truth beyond mere culture and history.

for an attack on Israel generations before (Dt 25:17–19; 1 Sam 15),³ and that commands the death penalty for a rebellious son (Dt 21:18–21) or advises gouging out one’s own sinful eye (Mt 5:29; 18:9). They know, even if only instinctively, the difference between formative and normative canonicity, yet they do not easily extend that distinction to other scriptures and their communities of faith.

The origins of sacred texts may be irretrievably obscured by the mists of time, like the Vedic mantras; or they may be precisely attributable to a more or less historically locatable author, like some of the New Testament letters. The texts may be aware of themselves as scripture, as the Qur’an seems to be; or they may be as unself-conscious as the Song of Songs. They may be canons composed of varied texts spanning centuries, like the Bible; or they may be unitary works with a relatively brief composition history, like the Book of Mormon. They may disclose their authors, like the Adi Granth; or veil them, like the Gita. What these texts have in common is that, in the eyes of their communities, they are expressions of the Truth. Indeed, the most complex thing about scriptures is the way in which these clearly delimited texts relate to limitless truth; how these culturally specific and often historically particular texts relate to a truth beyond mere culture and history. Jonathan Z. Smith has observed that canonization is a double process: the closure of the text, and then the use of exegetical ingenuity “to extend the domain of the closed canon over everything that exists *without* altering the canon in the process.”⁴ Outsiders to a religious tradition often only see

the closed nature of the canon and, if they know of it at all, they sometimes see the exegetical ingenuity of rabbis, ulema, and theologians as somehow secondary to the canon rather than as an essential element of canonicity. One cannot understand sacred texts if one sees only the closing without the opening, only the limitation without the extension.

Modernity has not been kind to canonicity, since it has tended to regard the exegetical ingenuity that extends the text as so much medieval obfuscation and priestcraft—not for nothing have “jesuitical” and “talmudic” sometimes been thought to be synonymous terms of opprobrium! The privileging of the relation of the literate individual to the original text—something we pride ourselves on in academia—has often led to the jettisoning of centuries of wisdom acquired in the process of negotiating the relationship between the text and the world that the community inhabits.

These texts are taken to be expressions of truth, but what happens when they seem to conflict with what the believer holds or even knows to be true? She cannot simply disregard the sacred text; she must find a way of reading it that will resolve the conflict or bridge the gap. She has two choices: she can privilege what she knows to be the case and then find a way of reading the text that is consonant with that. Or, alternatively, she can adopt the position that what she thinks she knows must bow before the plain meaning of the text. Maimonides considered this question at length with regard to the relationship of Torah to philosophy, though not to the satisfaction of all. Being convinced of the metaphysical truth that God is not a material



Cari Ferraro

Peter Canisius, S.J., *Handt-Boeck der Catholicken om Godturushtelick te Bidden*, Antwerp, 1630. Courtesy of SCU Archives and Special Collections.*

body, he chose to read as figurative any biblical passages that spoke of God's hands, wings, or face. The same position had been taken earlier by the Mu'tazilite readers of the Qur'an's anthropomorphisms. If he were convinced of the eternity of the world, Maimonides tells us, he would be prepared to read as figurative even the many passages in the Torah that speak of its being created in time.⁵ The principle is to give the most charitable reading of the text that will allow it to stand alongside other reliably based convictions.

There is a whole array of methods available to the believer to help negotiate this relating of the text to what we know to be true: etymology and semantics, grammar, textual variants, abrogation and contextualization, to name just a few. Furthermore, every part of a canon must "negotiate" with other parts. By being included in the canon, a text or part of a text seems to become more sacred and hence more authoritative. However, at the same time, it must accept to be read alongside alternative voices in the same canon. Many Muslims will consider the Qur'an verse that states, "There is no compulsion in religion" (Q 2:256), more authoritative than various verses that enjoin fighting against those who do not believe (e.g., Q 9:73, 123), or than the similarly canonical

sayings of the Prophet to similar effect. Halbertal offers the example from the Hebrew Bible of the rather hard-bitten and even heretical Qoheleth (Ecclesiastes), which many of the rabbis would rather have seen buried than canonized. The sting of this tract's cynicism is softened or even lost once it is included in scripture, since the reader will now find ways to understand it as consonant with the rest of the canon.⁶ Yes, as scripture it speaks with a more authoritative voice; but it is no longer allowed to say what it wants. In that respect, canonization can seem rather like ordination!

This approach to finding what we might call the most charitable reading of a text recalls the Presupposition of Ignatius Loyola's *Spiritual Exercises* (22) in which he maintains—no doubt schooled by bitter experience—that one ought to be more ready to justify than to condemn another's statement, and that one should spare no effort in finding a positive understanding of it in accord with the truth. This is surely good advice in any situation, particularly when dealing with canonical texts, yet it may have its limits. Though some, like the polemicists already mentioned, seek the most uncharitable reading of the text in order to desacralize it, other believers will argue that the text does not need our charity. The text is sovereign, and it is rather the reader's notion of truth that must bow. This attitude we know from the experience of scriptural literalism, in both its bloody and merely bloody-minded forms: whatever the rights and freedoms of the other, scripture says they deserve to die; whatever the fossil record might say, whatever the evidence of our telescopes, they must bow before the literal meaning of the scripture.

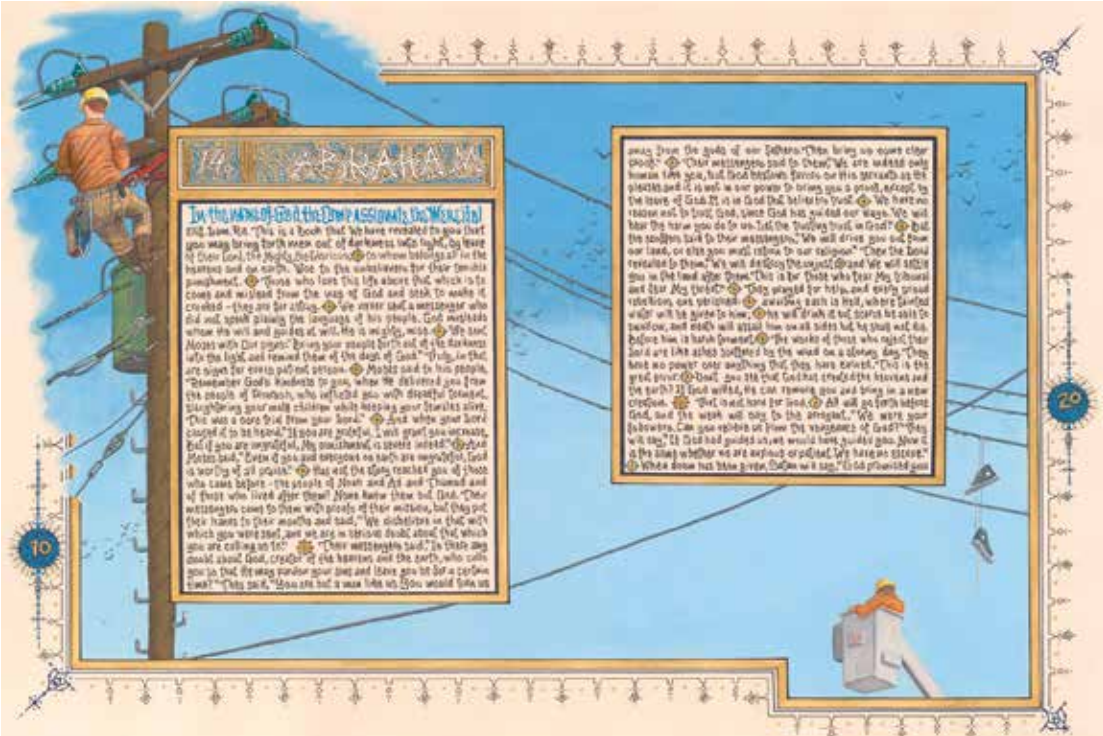
Even if one affirms such sovereignty of the text, however, one is not condemned to a shallow reading. Traditions have long maintained that sacred texts are multilayered, or three-dimensional. They have depths hidden below the surface, and so their content is not simply coextensive with the text as it appears to the casual reader. The Islamic tradition speaks of the *zahir* (outer) and the *batin* (inner), and one finds in many religious traditions notions of the exoteric and esoteric meanings of scripture. Furthermore, the kind of language that one

finds in sacred texts is considered (in most cases) divine language. Therefore, though it may seem on the surface to be like ordinary language, each letter and sound can function in myriad ways—numerical, mystical, symbolic—linking together, for some readers at least, all scriptures.⁷ Because of this divine aspect of scriptural language, textuality is transcended and canons come to be seen as the very foundation of the cosmos.⁸

As scholars we are fascinated, even driven, to explore the many complex and often unexpected ways these texts function, yet we do so recognizing that they are sacred to others, even if not to ourselves. The Qur'an, which is the focus of my work, is not scripture for me. However, for the sake of those for whom it is, I treat it with respect. In the end, it is the sacredness of the human person that demands of the scholar a particular approach to the text. Furthermore, it is the conviction of our universities that the human quest for wisdom and truth, for liberation and fullness of life, is ultimately, as the Second Vatican Council taught, a single quest that unites us all. This

makes it possible for scholars, a large percentage of them associated with Catholic universities, to engage with texts of other religious traditions as genuinely religious texts. One thinks, for example, of the series *Christian Commentaries on Non-Christian Sacred Texts* (Peeters/Eerdmans) edited by Catherine Cornille of Boston College; and one could multiply examples.

The Qur'an, of course, clearly sees itself as being part of the same tradition as the biblical and post-biblical texts of the Jews and Christians, which makes it both easier and more difficult for me to engage with. There are many aspects of its thought-world that are utterly familiar, and yet at the same time it does not hide its disapproval—God's disapproval, a Muslim might say—of central aspects of Christian faith. It proposes itself as a clarification and corrective without at the same time taking much interest in the actual sacred texts with which it claims a common origin. My work *The Qur'an's Self-Image*⁹ could be seen as an attempt by someone from outside the tradition to play a part in the "exegetical ingenuity" common to all scripted communities. I was trying to



Sandow Birk, American Qur'an / Sura 14 A, 2010, Ink and gouache on paper, 16 x 24 inches. Courtesy of Catharine Clark Gallery, San Francisco.*

Teaching the Qur'an to students of diverse religious traditions or none has become in recent years much more highly charged, both religiously and politically. I sense an obligation to make sure that the engagement with this canon takes account, not only of the closed text ... but also ... the ingenuity of the tradition in continuing to broaden and deepen the significations of that text.

find a satisfactory reading, from within the text and the tradition itself, of the central Qur'anic term *kitāb*, "scripture." Satisfactory to me, I admit, as someone who did not want to accept that a severely delimited text read in a flat, two-dimensional way was all that the Islamic tradition had to propose as God's speech. I argued that, while the Qur'an had a strong sense of canonicity, it saw itself as a point of contact with, or access to, the realm of the divine knowledge and authority; and furthermore, that the Islamic tradition had always recognized that God's speech could not be contained within and restricted to a time-bound text. It is a reading I offer to Muslim readers, many of whom are themselves unconvinced by claims that the text of the Qur'an is all God has to say, but who nonetheless recognize that it is in and through that text that they will hear what God has to say. Some have even found my reading helpful.


One reader told me the only thing in that book that suggested to her I was not a Muslim was the mention of my Jesuit brothers in the acknowledgments. Yet I recognize that my approach was profoundly, even if not obviously, shaped by my being Christian. And why should I not bring to the Qur'an whatever kind of exegetical ingenuity I can muster? Particularly in sibling traditions like Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, mutually respectful readings of each other's texts can be enormously productive. I have received so much from Jewish readers of the New Testament, particularly from Daniel Boyarin's reading of John's Gospel.¹⁰ He has taught me to read what is often thought of as the

most anti-Jewish of the gospels as a profoundly Jewish text, and in so doing has helped reshape my Christology and opened up new possibilities for mutual theological hospitality with Muslims.

Teaching the Qur'an to students of diverse religious traditions or none has become in recent years much more highly charged, both religiously and politically. I sense an obligation to make sure that the engagement with this canon takes account, not only of the closed text and a flattened reading, but also of J. Z. Smith's "sacred persistence" and the ingenuity of the tradition in continuing to broaden and deepen the significations of that text. It is a double obligation: it is essential for the students for whom this is not scripture to understand the complexity of the ways the Qur'an functions in Muslim life and thought, so that they do not wield the undigested text as a weapon against Muslims. At the same time, as Muslim students discover some of the richness of the exegetical tradition, it is no less essential that they come to understand the ethical responsibility they bear in their reading of the texts—a personal responsibility that cannot be contracted out to a medieval commentator, no matter how learned or pious.

It is perhaps more than a little ironic that my engagement with the Qur'an over these thirty years and my listening to Jewish readers of the New Testament has convinced me of the futility of using the term "scripture" to understand the relations of these three traditions. It has a superficial plausibility, particularly as the Qur'an introduces the

notion of Peoples of the Scripture (*ahl al-kitāb*) and acknowledges a certain legitimacy to the previous communities on the basis of their having received revelation. Yet at a deeper level, the term betrays the particularity of each tradition. It is difficult to argue that Christianity is a scriptural religion in the same way as either Islam or Judaism might be, and both of them have profound differences from each other in their approach. I have come to prefer “word”—God’s word—as the concept that reveals both our similarities and the particularity of each. For Christians, God’s word has been spoken primarily and definingly in flesh (Jn 1:14) rather than text. The sacred language of Christianity, therefore, is flesh and blood, and the texts we call sacred derive their authority from the community that came to recognize in these particular writings words that, all taken together in a negotiation of diverse views, witness to the Word they had seen and touched in the flesh and blood of Jesus of Nazareth (1Jn 1:1). It may be that Christian faith is just an extreme case of recognizing that the word of ultimacy for which human beings are listening cannot be exhausted by a text.

The late Mohammed Arkoun called sacred texts the locus where believers play host “to a power with an infinite capacity to signify things...the divine-revealing word.”¹¹ I think I would add that, in the encounter with our sacred texts, and those of others, we are also guests of that Word. 

DANIEL A. MADIGAN, S.J., is the Jeanette W. and Otto J. Ruesch Family Associate Professor in the Department of Theology, Georgetown University, where he currently serves as the Director of Graduate Studies. He is also a Senior Fellow of The Al-Waleed Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding and of the Woodstock Theological Center at Georgetown, where he is directing a project on Christian theologies that are responsive to Islam. Before moving to Georgetown, he taught in Rome, where he was the founder and director (2002–07) of the Institute for the Study of Religions and Cultures at the Pontifical Gregorian University.

NOTES

- 1 For a keenly insightful discussion of the relationship of the rabbinic tradition to the text of Torah, see David Weiss Halivni, *Revelation Restored: Divine Writ and Critical Responses* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1997).
- 2 Halbertal distinguishes three modes of canonicity: normative, formative and exemplary, though it is principally the first two that concern us here. Moshe Halbertal, *People of the Book: Canon, Meaning and Authority* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard, 1997), 3ff.
- 3 For a history of Jewish reflection on this, see Avi Sagi, “The Punishment of Amalek in Jewish Tradition: Coping with the Moral Problem,” *Harvard Theological Review* 87:3 (1994): 323–46. See also Elliott S. Horowitz, *Reckless rites: Purim and the legacy of Jewish violence* (Princeton University Press, 2006): 1–20, for the understanding of Amalek in relation to the Palestinians. For the spiritualizing of this image, see the talk of the Lubavitcher Rebbe on slaying one’s inner Amalekite: “Amalek: The Perpetual Enemy of the Jewish People,” in *Likkutei Sichos* 3 http://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/150871/jewish/Amalek-The-Perpetual-Enemy-of-the-Jewish-People.htm.
- 4 Jonathan Z. Smith, “Sacred Persistence: Towards a Redescription of Canon,” in *Imagining Religion: From Babylon to Jonestown* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 48, 36–52. Smith recognizes that the idea of a closed canon is not quite so straightforward when it comes, for example, to the Hindu tradition. However, one might still argue that the Vedas constitute a kind of canon within the larger canon. Smith offers (p. 40) a wonderful parallel from our material culture: wine. Though wine can be made from virtually any fruit, our culture has (with odd exceptions) limited the legitimate raw material to the berry of *Vitis vinifera*, and has then employed almost endless ingenuity in the development of varieties and methods of viticulture, and in the refinement of processes that result in a dizzying array of distinctive wines.
- 5 Moses Maimonides, *Guide for the Perplexed*, pt. II, ch. 25.
- 6 Halbertal, *People of the Book*, 23–26.
- 7 For an example of this approach applied across traditions, see René Guénon, “The Mysteries of the Letter Nūn,” *Studies in Comparative Religion* 14: 1–2 (Winter-Spring, 1980).
- 8 In her masterful study *Veda and Torah: Transcending the Textuality of Scripture* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1996), Barbara Holdrege explores the way that, with respect to both the Torah and the Vedas, a concrete corpus of text and interpretation comes to assume a cosmological significance as the blueprint and even the architect of creation.
- 9 Daniel A. Madigan, *The Qur’an’s Self-Image: Writing and Authority in Islam’s Scripture* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001).
- 10 See, for example, Daniel Boyarin, “The Gospel of the Memra: Jewish Binitarianism and the Prologue to John,” in *Harvard Theological Review* 94.3 (July 2001): 243–284, and his more recent and more controversial *The Jewish Gospels: The Story of the Jewish Christ* (The New Press, 2012).
- 11 Mohammed Arkoun, *Rethinking Islam: Common Questions, Uncommon Answers*, ed. and trans. Robert D. Lee (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1994), 42.



Marc Chagall. *Rabbi with Torah Scroll*, ca 1930. Collection Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam. Printed with permission.

A Non-Zionist *Drash* of *Lech Lecha*

“Lech lecha me’artzecha umimoladetcha umi beit avicha...”

Now the LORD said unto Abram: “Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father’s house, unto the land that I will show thee. And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and be thou a blessing.” GENESIS 12: 1–2



Charles Barry

BY JEFFREY ZORN
Senior Lecturer, Department of
English, Santa Clara University

SYNAGOGUES AROUND THE WORLD DIVIDE THE PENTATEUCH INTO CONSECUTIVE WEEKLY SABBATH READINGS, CALLED *PARSHAT*, FOR THE CHAZAN (CANTOR) TO CHANT AND THE RABBI TO OFFER A *DRASH* (REFLECTION) ON. THE *PARSHAT* ARE NAMED FOR THEIR OPENING WORDS; THE THIRD *PARSHA*, READ IN OCTOBER OR EARLY NOVEMBER, IS *LECH LECHA*.

For obvious reasons, *Lech Lecha* has been called “the Ur-text for Zionism.” This is lost on me, as nothing in my religious practice builds from commitment to Jewish nationalism or the State of Israel. I reject the idea that Jews are God’s (only) chosen people, and the “great nation” I am committed to is the USA. The significance of *Lech Lecha* lies, for me, elsewhere.

I am aware of few other Jewish people in my San Francisco neighborhood or at Santa Clara University, where I have taught since 1974. This is the farthest of cries from my 1950s

upbringing in Boston’s Roxbury-Dorchester ghetto. Every year, Elaine MacDonald and John Mills were my only gentile schoolmates, the only kids “present” during the Jewish high holidays, two out of 600. No more diverse was the downtown garment industry where my father labored in Hymie Sherman’s factory.

All my friends and I attended Hebrew school as well as public school, and Saturday mornings we all trudged to Temple Beth El for as Orthodox a service as diasporic Judaism offered: no English spoken, males and females separated, the white-bearded immigrant congregants around me wrapped in *tallitot* (prayer shawls) and *davening* (rocking in prayerful devotion) hour after hour. And I, fidgety and impatient, eager for sunlight and baseball, breathed the room’s sentiment deep into my essence: the awe, the longing, the solemn concentration on text, the plaintive minor-key melodies before which I remain helpless to this day.

I left my kindred and father's house to attend Boston Latin School, Dartmouth, Cambridge, Harvard, and Stanford. Between Harvard and Stanford, I taught for six years at a historically black college in Alabama, and my work at Santa Clara began at the onset of my Stanford Ph.D. studies. Past sixth grade, then, my entire public life has been spent among gentiles—a blessing, as per *Lech Lecha*.

Immersion in multicultural, pluralistic institutions is healthy spiritually, culturally, politically, and educationally. Get a base, a foundation, in youth; then move out, move on; expand your horizon. A liberal education like Santa Clara University's challenges every belief, opinion, and priority that students come with, and the cumulative effect is *perspective*. They see their necessarily provincial upbringing afresh, through distant others' eyes, and consciously decide what to keep, modify, and abandon. Welcoming the company of people not "their kind," they grow in empathy, tolerance, openness of mind, and openness of heart, preparing to be men and women for others.

Tribal solidarity, in sharpest contrast, prepares the young for ritualized adulthood in outposts, clans, squadrons, and mobs of the like-minded.

Teachers of technical subjects may stay hidden behind their material, but teachers in the humanities mostly offer *themselves* to students. The "whole student" can be educated only by the "whole professor."

I come before Santa Clara University students, then, as an emissary from the Dorchester ghetto, channeling accents they otherwise never would hear. I channel as well my own professors—classicists, political theorists, historians, literary critics, philosophers. I speak also as a first-generation college (and high school!) student, a competitive athlete, the author of a hundred-plus publications, a husband and father, a scared but not intimidated marcher over the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma, a wilderness hiker, a dancing maniac at a hundred-plus Grateful Dead concerts. All this is conveyed to students not as curriculum but in hints of pedagogy, class meeting by class meeting, office visit by office visit.



William Deutsch, *Kids Talking in Services*, Acrylic ink on paper, 2010; Sarah Laughed, Acrylic ink on paper, 2011.*

The “blessing” I can be for students, then, includes quirkiness, my oddness in their eyes, all the “difference” I embody and project. It says there is room for them, too, in the company of the higher educated: just apply yourself, see the beauty in your studies as well as their utility, let your studies become part of you, and you’ll get there. Patently, it’s worth the effort.

The “blessing” I can be for students, then, includes quirkiness, my oddness in their eyes, all the “difference” I embody and project. It says there is room for them, too, in the company of the higher educated: just apply yourself, see the beauty in your studies as well as their utility, let your studies become part of you, and you’ll get there. Patently, it’s worth the effort.

The essence of religion as I understand it is gratitude, taking nothing for granted, including life itself. For thirty-eight years, Santa Clara University students and colleagues have inspired, uplifted, and brought out the best in me. Ambling toward retirement, I feel ever more thankful for that, ever more pleased with my choice of career, and ever braver about sharing myself. What’s to lose, really?


So I conclude by sharing what happens every Yom Kippur after our brilliant young *chazan*, David Cohen-Tzedek, has chanted the ineffably beautiful *Kol Nidre*, reducing the congregation to mush, and the *Amidah* prayer begins.

I stand, head down, eyes closed, woozy already from fasting, and my mind’s eye streams photographic images of my parents, beaming love toward me. Then come my uncles, aunts, cousins, and grandmother, one at a time and then all together in front of a long train of spirits crowding forward, generations of our relatives from the Old Country—Poland, Russia, and Lithuania.

I stand taller now, the great wave of spirits washing past, around, over, and through me. I bask in their heat and light, but soon I feel a

great pressure: the freest, least constrained of Jews, in America, its near-holy First Amendment proclaiming there can be no state religion, I live and work as the culmination of an immigrant narrative going back centuries. Somehow I—the least gifted, least heroic of men—must validate the dreams of so many oppressed, disdained, ghettoized, pogromed, rounded-up forebears.

It’s too much to handle, and I wilt. There is no other recourse available, and so I pray: “Almighty God, *Adonai Elohaynu*, grant me the means to be more than I am. Let my every action honor the investments made in me. Let me serve my wife, my children, my students, my country, and the world, your creation, for another year.”

I sit down, spent, but with fresh, as yet inexhaustible resolve. 

JEFFREY ZORN has taught in the English Department at Santa Clara University since 1974. He attended Dartmouth College in Hanover, New Hampshire, as a classics major and did further study in Greek and Roman literature at Magdalene College, Cambridge University. He holds an MAT degree in the teaching of English from Harvard University and a Ph.D. in Philosophy of Education from Stanford University. Professor Zorn lives in San Francisco with his wife, Ann, two children Sam and Sarah, his niece Emily and nephew Hal, one yappy dog Tura, and one large, imperious cat, Shayna.

Living Values through the Center for Social Justice and Public Service*

"If your brother becomes poor...uphold him."

LEVITICUS 25:35

"Justice, justice you shall pursue."

DEUTERONOMY 16:20



Keith Surter



Nancy Martin

BY STEPHANIE M. WILDMAN AND
DEBORAH MOSS-WEST '94
*Center for Social Justice and Public Service,
Santa Clara University School of Law*

We begin this essay by contextualizing our commitments through our own stories and traditions, for these familial and religious roots inspire and ground our teaching, writing, and larger professional work within law, social justice, and public service.

STEPHANIE WILDMAN: My mother was a teacher and my father was a lawyer, so some might say that my career as a law professor was a kind of destiny. But for me, a white Jewish woman who grew up in an Orthodox home, teaching at a Jesuit university was not an obvious career path. But the Jesuit commitment to inclusive excellence as practiced at Santa Clara University has helped me and my work to flourish. Jesuit values mesh well with *tikkun olam*, the Jewish tradition of repairing the world.

DEBORAH MOSS-WEST: I was raised in a traditional Baptist family that stressed Christian values and education. I have always had a strong connection to my faith. It was no surprise in 1990 that upon arrival on Santa Clara University's campus to attend law school, I felt a strong connection to the University and Jesuit values. I hoped this setting would allow me to be myself. Now as an employee twenty years later, I have come full circle—continuing to nurture my thirst for knowledge, to learn from and teach others, and to help spread the Gospel.

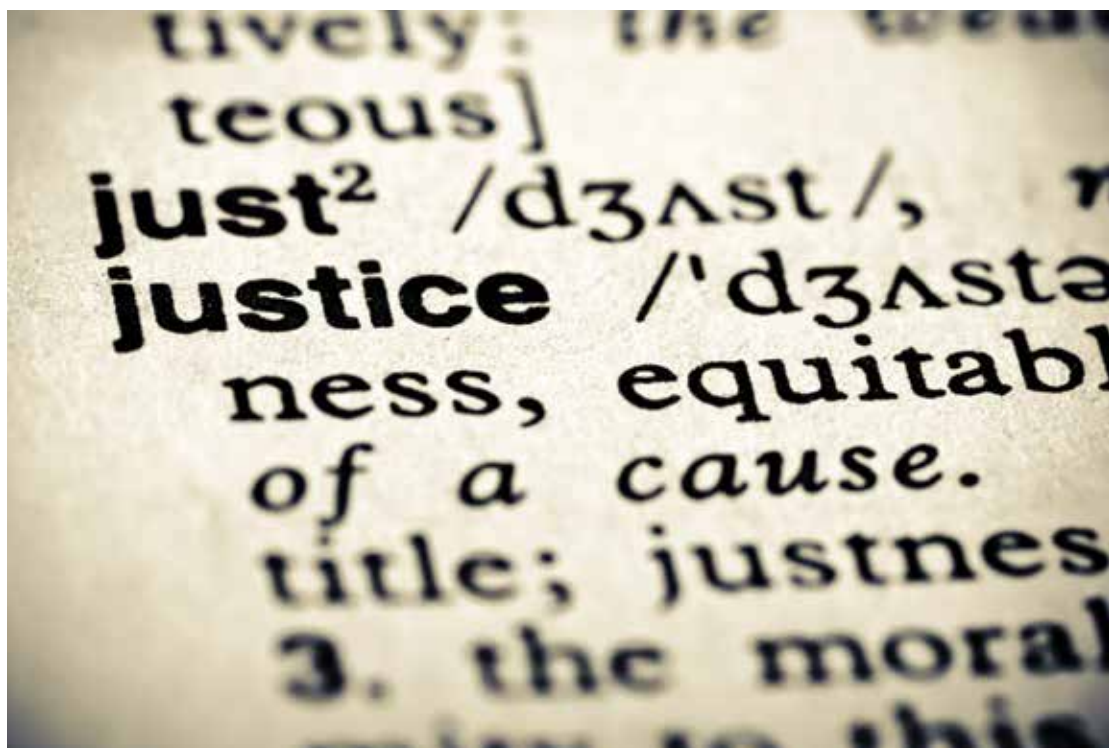
ACCORDING TO A 2012 AMERICAN BAR ASSOCIATION STUDY, AT LEAST 40 PERCENT OF LOW- AND MODERATE-INCOME HOUSEHOLDS EXPERIENCE A LEGAL PROBLEM EACH YEAR. YET STUDIES SHOW THAT THE COLLECTIVE LEGAL AID EFFORT IS MEETING ONLY ABOUT 20 PERCENT OF THE LEGAL NEEDS OF LOW-INCOME PEOPLE.¹

Unlike defendants in criminal cases, low-income parties in most civil proceedings have no right to appointed counsel.² Low-income parties' legal needs often go unmet when potential litigants are without resources to hire an attorney. The Santa Clara Law Center for Social Justice and Public Service tries to address this justice gap in many ways, but especially by educating students to work with underserved communities and facilitating avenues for students to engage in public service work, thus increasing available representation to marginalized, subordinated, and underrepresented clients and causes. Although the responsibility to help others is universal, the call has a meaning that is inextricably tied to the admonishment in Leviticus 25:35, "uphold him"—we are to help others. Santa Clara School of Law's commitment

to educating lawyers of "conscience, competence, and compassion" highlights Jesuit, Christian values, which are also Jewish values.³

Centers for Social Justice can play the role of providing an institutional context and support for this undertaking of closing the justice gap that brings students, faculty, staff, alumni, and members of the community together while increasing the teaching, learning, and service opportunities that can provide more legal assistance to underrepresented communities. The law school curriculum is an essential component to providing knowledge about and access to this social justice work. Course offerings, including certificates in public interest and social justice law, help students develop the vocabulary and theoretical background that will infuse their practical work. A certificate program, along with the center's extracurricular activities and pro bono emphasis, creates an institutional context in which students who want to pursue social justice work, either as a career or as a lifelong commitment in any law practice can find support and friendship, and thrive.

Scholars like Gerald López have characterized education for social justice as "The



Work We Know So Little About.”⁴ Work against subordination does require knowledge—in fact, many kinds of knowledge. In Santa Clara’s law and social justice classes, we seek to convey such knowledge. The primary text we use in these courses underlines three aspects of lawyering for social justice.⁵ The text and the course begins with the organization of the legal profession: aspirations, why come to study law, the nature of legal education, access to justice, kinds of social justice practice, and an overview of working with communities. It then shifts gears to address the development of social justice law, including the nature of rights-based claims and a history of struggles for social justice in areas like work, welfare, and livelihood, essential to basic human needs. The text also looks at social justice issues key to the practice of democracy: education, voting, protection against harm, and the judiciary and role of judges. The materials ask whether one can be a judge for social justice, just as the course considers lawyering for social justice. It next turns to questions of politics, legal work, and social change. The text and the course conclude with a reading on “becoming a lawyer, staying yourself,”⁶ giving modern-day meaning to the mandate to pursue justice and help others, illustrating many kinds of actions, modes of law practice, and struggles in that movement toward justice.

It is a full semester, and to complement this theoretical reading, the law students do original case study research, finding a social justice

case and interviewing the parties, the lawyers, community groups, and if possible the judge. Student evaluations support the value of the course:

“The course was one of the most important classes that I’ve taken in law school, because it really taught me what it means to be a lawyer and the responsibilities that the profession carries with it.”

“The most valuable part of the course (and to my legal education and learning in general) was the case study. Being able to look at a legal case or issue and interview the ‘players’ and analyze the challenges presented was a really valuable experience.”

“The case study enabled us to speak with attorneys who have incorporated social justice work into their everyday practice.”

As these descriptions suggest, social justice education reaches students, contributing to their lifelong learning and commitment.

In an exciting new class, we are also team teaching this law and social justice course material to undergraduate students, who complement the reading and class discussion with a two-hour-per-week community-based learning placement. As one student explained:

“Our assignment: put a face to the legal theory we were studying in the class Law and Social Justice. The place: a local community center—perhaps a soup kitchen or a legal clinic. I found myself drawn to Casa de Clara in San Jose. The description for it read: ‘Interact and




Courtesy of Stephanie Wildman and Deborah Moss-West

Inaugural Law and Social Justice undergraduate class, Santa Clara University, Winter 2011

Social justice education confers the possibility to each person that she or he can make a difference in the world ... Students' lived experience, building practice from those texts, reinforces the message that "Yes, we can" seek justice and help our communities.

have dinner with homeless women (and young children) in an intimate, homelike shelter.”

“It’s one thing to read about complexities... but that learning really hits home when you’re helping a homeless woman navigate the complex process of filing a request for food stamps.”⁷

Social justice education confers the possibility to each person that she or he can make a difference in the world. As the Honorable Cruz Reynoso has said about making changes in the legal system, “Si, se puede!”⁸ The texts in the classroom echo biblical mandates. “If your brother becomes poor...uphold him” (Leviticus 25:35). “Justice, justice you shall pursue” (Deuteronomy 16:20). Students’ lived experience, building practice from those texts, reinforces the message that “Yes, we can” seek justice and help our communities. 

STEPHANIE M. WILDMAN writes extensively in the areas of social justice, race, gender, and the law. Her book *Privilege Revealed: How Invisible Preference Undermines America* (with contributions by Margalynne Armstrong, Adrienne D. Davis, and Trina Grillo) won the 1997 Outstanding Book Award from the Gustavus Meyers Center for Human Rights. Professor Wildman was the founding director of the Center for Social Justice at the University of California at Berkeley School of Law (Boalt Hall) and currently serves as John A. and Elizabeth H. Sutro Professor of Law and Director of the Center for Social Justice and Public Service at Santa Clara University School of Law.

DEBORAH MOSS-WEST received her J.D. from Santa Clara University School of Law in 1994 and has been Assistant Director at the Center for Social Justice and Public Service since 2008. Prior to joining Santa Clara Law, Moss-West worked at the East Bay Community Law Center (EBCLC) for eight years, serving as Deputy Director and Development Officer.

NOTES

*For an expanded version of many of the ideas discussed in this essay, see Deborah Moss-West and Stephanie M. Wildman, “A Social Justice Lens Turned on Legal Education: Next Steps” (37 *Journal of the Legal Profession* 2013).

- 1 South Carolina Lawyers Serving the Public Good, *The Need for Pro Bono* (2012), <http://www.probono.net/sc/>.
- 2 See *Gideon v. Wainwright*, 372 U.S. 335 (1963), holding indigent criminal defendants have a right to counsel in all criminal trials; noting the right to counsel essential to a fair trial. See also Louis S. Rulli, “On the Road to Civil Gideon: Five Lessons from the Enactment of a Right to Counsel for Indigent Homeowners in Federal Civil Forfeiture Proceedings,” *Journal of Law and Policy* 19, no. 2:683 (2011), detailing the movement for a right to a “civil Gideon.” A number of states have expanded the right to counsel in civil cases for certain kinds of legal matters. See Laura K. Abel, “Keeping Families Together, Saving Money, and Other Motivations Behind New Civil Right to Counsel Laws,” *Loyola of Los Angeles Law Review* 42:1087 (2009), describing statutes in Alabama, Arkansas, Connecticut, Florida, Hawaii, Louisiana, Montana, New York, and Texas; and Claire Pastore, “A Civil Right to Counsel: Closer to Reality?” *Loyola of Los Angeles Law Review* 42:1065 (2009), detailing a California pilot program.
- 3 See Santa Clara University School of Law, Santa Clara Law: Dean Donald J. Polden, <http://law.scu.edu/dean> (last visited Nov. 9, 2012).
- 4 Gerald P. López, “The Work We Know So Little About,” *Stanford Law Review* 42:1 (1989); Stephanie M. Wildman with Beverly Moran & Margalynne Armstrong, “Revisiting the Work We Know So Little About,” *UC Irvine Law Review* 2:1011 (2012).
- 5 The text for Santa Clara’s Law and Social Justice course is Martha R. Mahoney, John O. Calmore, & Stephanie M. Wildman, *Social Justice: Professionals, Communities, and Law* 2d 1 (2013), which identifies the goal of social justice practice as serving “marginalized, subordinated, and underrepresented clients and causes.”
- 6 Ibid.
- 7 Liz Carney, “Make It Real,” *Santa Clara Magazine*, Summer 2011, available at <http://www.scu.edu/scm/article.cfm?b=439&c=11541>.
- 8 Hon. Cruz Reynoso, in *Cruz Reynoso: Sowing the Seeds of Justice* (Abby Ginzberg Films 2010), discussing the potential appointment of an Asian American or Native American to the U.S. Supreme Court—“Yes, we can.”

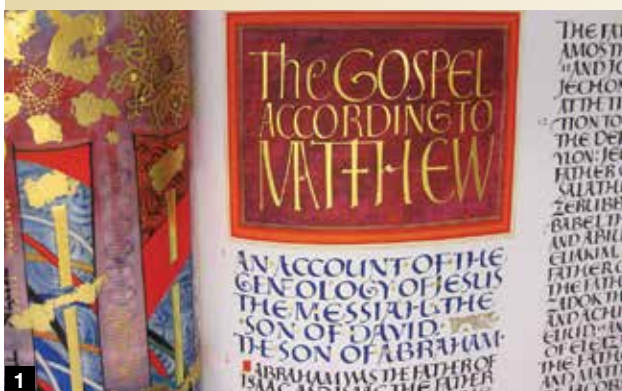
Interpreting and Embodying Sacred Texts in the Public Sphere: A Photo Essay

BY THERESA LADRIGAN-WHELPLEY

Director of Institutes and Spirituality, Ignatian Center for Jesuit Education, Santa Clara University

The 2012-13 Bannan Institute of the Ignatian Center for Jesuit Education featured a yearlong series of lectures and events around the topic: Sacred Texts in the Public Sphere. Leading into the 2012 presidential election in the United States, the fall quarter lectures explored the relationship between Christian Scriptures, national identity, and public conscience. In the winter quarter, conversation partners within the Institute expanded to consider the authority and content of sacred texts from diverse faith traditions and contexts, including the Hebrew Bible, the Qur'an, the Bhagavata Purana, various Buddhist sutras, and the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*. The Institute concluded in the spring with events focused on how critical engagement with sacred texts and traditions is relevant to the work of a Jesuit, Catholic University. Many of the 2012-13 Bannan Institute lectures are available for viewing online at scu.edu/ic.

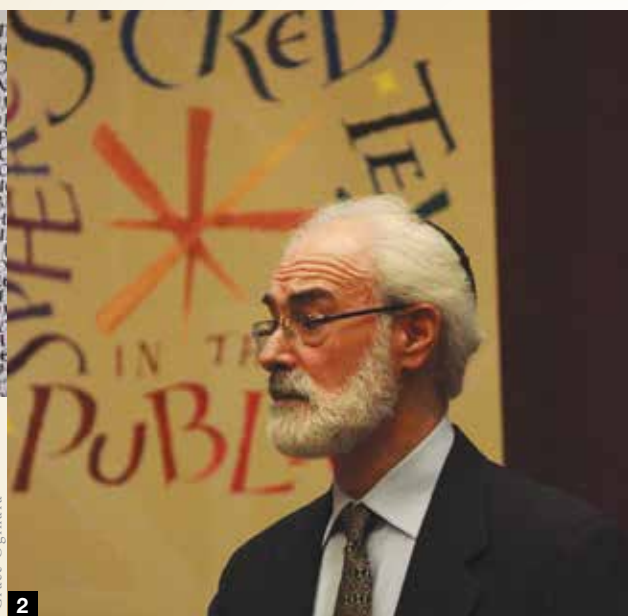
Cari Ferraro



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1. The theme for the 2012-13 Bannan Institute was inspired by the Saint John's Bible, a hand written, hand-illuminated Bible that models how ancient texts can engage the resources and questions of modern culture, science, technology and the creative arts. A Heritage Edition of the Saint John's Bible was gifted to Santa Clara University by Tita Crilly Diepenbrock.

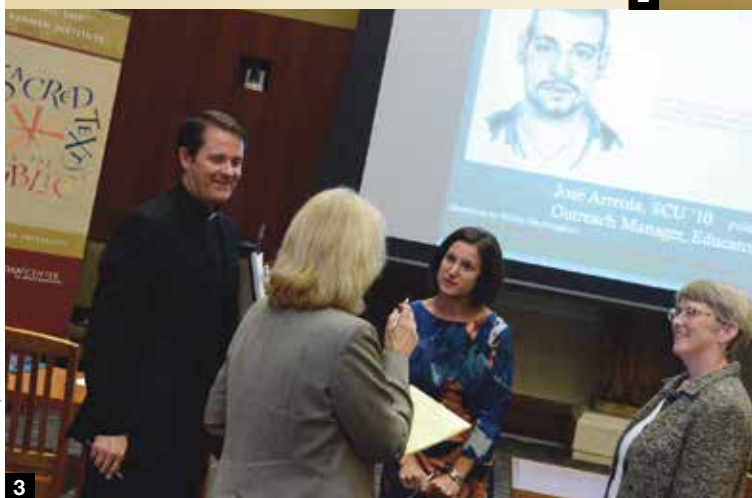
Grace Ogihara



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2. Professor Michael Fishbane, University of Chicago Divinity School, offered a lecture on "Creating a Culture of Care: Hebrew Scripture and Jewish Tradition on Charity and Hospitality," as part of the Winter 2013 lecture series.

Charles Barry



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3. Professor Kristin Heyer from Santa Clara's Religious Studies Department offered a lecture on the "Scriptural Politics of Immigration: Subversive Hospitality and Kinship," as part of the Fall 2012 lecture series. Here, Professor Heyer (second from right) is engaging with faculty following her lecture.



4. The Bannan Institute featured a three-part series on “Sacred Pixels: Exploring Sacred Texts in Digitally Integrated Culture,” curated by Elizabeth Drescher (center) and Paul Soukup, S.J. (right) of Santa Clara University. Here, Lisa Webster (left), senior editor, *Religion Dispatches*, reflects with them on contemporary religious practice in online media.

4

Grace Ogihara



5

Grace Ogihara



6

Adam Hayes

5. More than 2,500 students, faculty, and staff and community members, from a range of religious traditions and contexts, took part in the lectures and offerings on campus over the course of the year.

6. Archbishop Michael Fitzgerald, Past President of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, delivered the 2013 Santa Clara Lecture, “Christian-Muslim Relations Since Vatican II: ‘To Recognize and Develop the Spiritual Bonds that Unite Us’ (John Paul II),” as part of the Spring 2013 offerings.

“The Church has learnt to relate to Muslims and other people of different religions...through neighborliness, through joint action, through the sharing of spiritual values...”

—2013 Santa Clara Lecture, Archbishop Michael Fitzgerald

7. Several visiting lecturers participated in a composite undergraduate and graduate seminar course, Scriptural Politics: Christian Texts in the Public Sphere, linked with the Fall 2012 lecture series. Here, Professor Jeffrey Siker, Department of Theological Studies, Loyola Marymount University, engages students following his lecture, "Scriptural Politics of Family and Homosexuality: Textual Orientations."



7

Grace Ogihara



8

Cari Ferraro



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Cari Ferraro

8. With Archives and Special Collections, the Bannan Institute sponsored a curated exhibit, *Dialoguing with Sacred Texts: An Exhibit of Sacred Texts Past, Present, and Future*, from February to June 2013. This exhibit featured ancient and contemporary sacred books from diverse traditions and contexts, as well as the work of 15 contemporary artists working in a variety of media to engage the unfolding dynamic of sacred texts.

9. This photograph, by artist Terri Garland, is part of a series within the exhibit depicting Bibles pulled from mud-caked pews and condemned church floors in New Orleans in the wake of Hurricane Katrina, relics of communities of faith and fellowship in the face of natural and human disaster.



10

Grace Ogihara

10. Visitors take in the *Dialoguing with Sacred Texts* exhibit at the opening reception in February 2013.

11. One of the exhibiting artists, Professor Renée Billingslea, Art and Art History Department, Santa Clara University, created original work for the exhibit. This piece, *Con-shoe-tution*, encyclopedia pages, cotton, and wood, 2013, uses rolled encyclopedia pages to make the suggestion that the freedoms promised by the Constitution depend on the knowledge of its citizens.



11

Cari Ferraro

A Pet Name for My Beloved

Love Poems from God:

Twelve Sacred Voices from the East and West,

translated by Daniel Ladinsky (2002)

Courtesy of Maggi Van Dorn '08



BY MAGGI VAN DORN '08

IT WAS MAY 2009 WHEN, IN THE FINAL STRETCH OF A TUMULTUOUS YEAR WITH THE JESUIT VOLUNTEER CORPS (JVC), MY COMMUNITY WAS INVITED INTO A THREE-DAY SILENT RETREAT.

I was living in the constant emotional wake of working with people in drug and alcohol recovery, and wrestling heavily with the question of what I would do after JVC. For three days, I followed the prescription of active reflection: journaling furiously, praying the Ignatian examen, participating in spiritual direction, and composing an elaborate art collage. My efforts yielded insight, but also, introspection fatigue.

One star-studded night, wanting nothing more than a small nugget of consolation, I ventured into the retreat center's library. The room was still, except for the swirl of loosened dust and the old book spines that crackled when opened. I ran my fingertips along the stacks, pausing over the recognized classics, but resting finally upon one curiously titled red book, *Love Poems from God*. As I fanned through the collection, I noticed some familiar names—Francis of Assisi, Thomas Aquinas, Teresa of Avila, Rumi—and some not so familiar names—Rabia, Kabir, Mira, Meister Eckhart.

The translator, Daniel Ladinsky, clearly had a penchant for an East–West mystical fusion, which intrigued me because I had never before encountered such a diverse company of religious luminaries in one volume. I flipped insouciantly through the book until one poem fixed my attention. It read:

Just
sit there right now.
Don't do a thing. Just rest.

For your
separation from God
is the hardest work in this world.

Let me bring you trays of food and something
that you like to
drink.

You can use my soft words
as a cushion
for your
head.

—Hafiz¹

I wasn't sure if it was the direct address of the poem, or its immediate relevance to my emotional state, but I swore, as Martin Luther swore on Romans 1:17, and Augustine on Romans 13:13–14, that *this poem* was speaking directly to me. Although exhausted by my first year in social work, I was ardently mining for truth and trying to engineer a greater spiritual connection. And Hafiz tells me, with unshakable tenderness, to *just sit there. To rest.* With immediate relief I collapsed to the library floor, where I spent the next few hours engrossed by one poem after another.

Love Poems from God does not fall under the classical canon of holy scriptures insofar as it is one contemporary translator's creative compilation of twelve mystical voices, writing centuries apart, from within the distinct Catholic, Muslim, and Hindu faiths. But then again, are not most traditional religious texts accumulated over hundreds of years and stitched together from a great plurality of voices? One of the most provocative features of this anthology is that the poems have a mysterious way of veiling formal religious differences, while gesturing toward ultimate, omnipresent reality. It is as though twelve witnesses have each given an astonishingly similar testimony about the sacredness of existence, the intricacies of the human heart, and God's unrelenting compassion for us.

Collectively, they are also very fond of bestowing God with pet names. Almost all refer to God as "Beloved." Rumi speaks of "the Friend," Hafiz prefers "the beautiful one," Kabir refers to "the physician," and Teresa of Avila "the divine medic." Tukaram jokes of "the Old Guy," while Mira sticks with her "lover." The informality with which these poets speak of, and to, the divine left me wondering, *What glimpse of God, or deep familiarity, must have sparked these nicknames?* Rabia, an eighth-century Islamic saint from Mesopotamia (now Iraq), accounts for her renaming of God in this way:

Would you come if someone called you
by the wrong name?

I wept, because for years He did not enter my
arms;
then one night I was told a
Secret:

Perhaps the name you call God is
not really His, maybe it
is just an
alias.

I thought about this, and came up with a pet
name
for my Beloved I never mention
to others.

All I can say is—
It works.²

While I always savored the power of words, it never occurred to me that perhaps I had assigned God an all too generic name, a name that conformed nicely to ecclesial settings, but impeded my own ability to speak candidly in prayer. If language carries a host of associations, most of them subtle or unconscious, should we not harness the power of words, and of naming, to better reflect our deeply relational experiences with the divine?

As Ladinsky explains in the preface, *Love Poems from God* rests on the commonly held belief that these holy men and women have either experienced union with God, or were "so void of self-interest and so full of love for God and humanity that they became holy lutes,"³ intoning the divine's voice through their songs and poetry. It is certainly not the first text to claim divine inspiration, but unlike other sacred texts that treat a variety of important moral and legal concerns, this volume exclusively proclaims the love of God. These authors have been seized by love in a radical way and simply cannot stop gushing about it. While the love of God is, again, central to most faith traditions, this poetry made me wonder if hearing about love, talking about love, pontificating about love, without ever attempting to describe that love in richly human terms, desensitizes us to the word

itself. Teresa of Avila, a 16th-century Catholic saint, enjoins God to “love us in a way our souls can taste and rejoice in.”⁴ What follows in her poetic verse are exceedingly sensual articulations of a God who tickles the heavy-hearted and suckles at her breast. Teresa is not alone here. Each of the poets reveal a similar pattern of engaging the divine with no small degree of intimacy, slack-jawed wonder, and some occasional bawdiness. The 16th-century Hindu poet-saint Mira addresses God as one might a high school crush:

You should act more responsible, God,
with all that gorgeousness you
possess.

You have made all my friends nuts
and basically unfit to do much else but dream of
you—and
plot drawing your mouth
close again.

The soup kitchens are complaining
about our wisdom of
getting drunk
all day

on the gossip we
share about
you.⁵

To explain what the playful levity and earthy textures of these verses have done for my own spiritual life would be like attempting to contain the fragrance of a blushing rose. They have suffused my imagination entirely. But what I can say is this: they have persuaded me to believe that love is not one among many divine attributes, but the single most defining feature of God, which will not quit. They have said this in a way my soul can taste and my bones can rejoice in.

Shortly after my discovery of *Love Poems* on retreat, I was leading a basic life skills workshop for my clients in recovery. At the end of the workshop, I read one of Thomas Aquinas’s poems aloud to the group. One man, who I knew mostly for his angry outbursts, approached me after the reading with uncharacteristic

serenity. He told me he liked the poem, asked for a copy, and then with striking solemnity added, “Thank you for bringing poetry into our lives. It helps more than you know.” This encounter got me thinking about poetry’s capacity to work differently upon us than prose. By eliminating the clutter that often accompanies prose, poems allow for pregnant pauses, choice words, and prolonged resonances. They deliberately train the eye to adopt a more contemplative gaze. For those who are wearied—by addiction or everyday anxieties—these soft words can double as a “cushion for your head.”

In addition to becoming my regular vehicle of prayer, *Love Poems from God* awakened me to poetry’s spiritual potency, that is, its capacity to evoke the sacred from the mundane details of our lives. It is a spiritual exercise for me not only to read and contemplate poetry, but to allow myself to be so aroused by these lyrical hints of God that I write “love poems” from my own experiences with the Tender One. In this way, creative writing has continuously partnered my theological studies and ministry formation. The more that I share the exercise of both reading and writing with others, the more I recognize their joint ability to minister with surgeon-like delicacy to many kinds of people, and their great instrumentality within my own practice of ministry. **e**

MAGGI VAN DORN is a 2008 alum of Santa Clara University, where she studied Religion and English. She served in the Jesuit Volunteer Corps in San Francisco at the Friendship House Association of American Indians Inc., and graduated from Harvard Divinity School with a Masters of Divinity this spring. She is currently working with the Arrupe International Immersion program at Boston College, and in her free time she is editing *The Oracle Body Project*, a collection of personal essays that explore the connection between the body and spirituality.

NOTES

- 1 “Hafiz,” in *Love Poems from God: Twelve Sacred Voices from the East and the West*, trans. Daniel Ladinsky (New York: Penguin Group, 2002), 150.
- 2 “Rabia,” *ibid.*, 1.
- 3 Daniel Ladinsky, *ibid.*, xii.
- 4 “Teresa of Avila,” *ibid.*, 284.
- 5 “Mira,” *ibid.*, 240.

Listening to God in Community

“Then which of the favors of your Lord will ye deny?” SURAH RAHMAN (55)



Matt Smith

BY SEHER SIDDIQEE
*Junior, Religious Studies
and Psychology Major,
Santa Clara University*

GROWING UP AS A MUSLIM, I LEARNED THAT THE QUR’AN IS THE SACRED TEXT FOR MUSLIMS, BELIEVED TO BE THE DIRECT WORD OF GOD REVEALED TO THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD AS THE FINAL MESSAGE TO HUMANKIND. Yet often when I thought about the Qur’an, I thought of a book, hundreds of pages filled with words and verses, bound by two covers that sits on my shelf. In Arabic, the word “quran” comes from the triliteral root “q/r/a,” which means “to declaim; to recite.”¹ So the Qur’an is actually more than just a “book”—it is itself a proclamation, the Word of God. But what does all this mean to me? And what role does the Qur’an hold in my studies and life as a Muslim student at a Jesuit, Catholic university?

When I was four years old, I started learning the Arabic alphabet so that I could read the Qur’an. To be fair, I was not actually learning to *read* the Qur’an and understand it, I was learning how to *pronounce* the words. I worked

with my teacher and read it from cover to cover, along with memorizing *surahs* (chapters). After completing this, I continued memorizing *surahs*, and one of the first ones was Ar-Rahman, “The Merciful,” considered to be one of the most poetic *surahs* in the Qur’an.² A couple of years later, I stopped meeting with my teacher and soon after that my regular interaction with the Qur’an stopped too, and I could feel what I had learned beginning to slip away.

For most Muslims, the recitation and memorization of the Qur’an are just as important as being able to read the Qur’an. Many Muslims spend years perfecting their recitation—often sounding musical³—and this is one of the ways Muslims are able to develop a shared experience of the Qur’an across time and space. However, when I was learning to read and recite the Qur’an, I did not realize the power of *listening* to the Qur’an and engaging the Qur’an in community. Because I previously started memorizing Surah Rahman, I



The first 13 verses of Surah Ar-Rahman in Arabic.

occasionally listened to it for its familiarity, but the significance of incorporating this recitation and listening into my regular practice had not yet clicked.

In the summer of 2012, between my sophomore and junior years at Santa Clara University, I participated in a two-month Arabic language intensive program. I was excited to learn the grammar and vocabulary necessary, not just to pronounce or recite the Qur'an, but to *understand* the Qur'an. This program became the opportunity I was waiting for, and opened up my experience and engagement with the Qur'an in surprising ways. Every night all of the enrolled students in the summer program gathered together to recite a passage of Qur'an before bed. Each voice joined with the others in one harmony. This came to be one of my favorite parts of the program; no matter what happened that day, we were all together sharing a sacred moment and connection that went beyond the walls of the room to the larger Muslim community and to God.

So the Qur'an is actually more than just a "book"—it is itself a proclamation, the Word of God. But what does all this mean? And what role does the Qur'an hold in my studies and life as a Muslim student at a Jesuit, Catholic university?

When the program ended, I continued reading a passage every night. In order to maintain a practice similar to my experience at the summer intensive program, I also listened to a recorded recitation as I read. I began listening to the Qur'an daily on my drive to

and from school, and through this I learned some of the chapters by heart, much like the lyrics to my favorite songs. I found a translation of the Qur'an that I liked, and I took time to read passages in English along with listening. Each of these new activities and steps became intrinsically motivating and satisfactory. Although many times the passages were random, I came back to ones that were familiar, such as Ar-Rahman. Not only did I remember what I learned, but also the time and precision my

teachers took to unpack the larger meaning of these passages.

As the days have passed, these practices have become something I rely on—my background “music” for more of my daily activities: writing papers, reading for class, or sitting in my bed, doodling. The more interaction I have with the Qur'an, the more I recognize stories, names, and words, and the more excited I become. A text that previously felt quite foreign to me, that I wasn't able to fully understand in all its forms,

During my time at Santa Clara, I have had the honor of cultivating friendships with people I would have never imagined possible. Having a respectful relationship with someone who does not share your most fundamental and central beliefs can be challenging, but it is also inspiring and encouraging. Because of our differences, we are compelled to encounter one another with a deeper level of love and respect.



Cari Ferraro

Illuminated Koran circa 18th Century, written by Uthman, servant of the Zulfliyan Mosque. Courtesy of SCU Archives and Special Collections.*

is now finding a unique meaning in my life. There is a common Muslim saying: “If you want to talk to God, perform the daily prayers. If you want God to talk to you, read the Qur’an.” I am now taking a more active and present role in the development of my faith. When I choose to memorize a passage from the Qur’an, it is because I want to enter into the text, to experience a meaning beyond the words on the page. God is talking to *me*, conveying God’s message to *me*.

One of the most frequent questions I am asked, and subsequently have spent a lot of time reflecting on, is: “How has your faith been affected being a Muslim at a Jesuit university?” Santa Clara University has been a place where my faith has been strengthened tremendously. I am in my second year serving as the Interfaith Intern in Campus Ministry. As the Interfaith Intern, I help create space and opportunity for dialogue between individuals of many different traditions. This has allowed me to cultivate my own relationship with people from diverse traditions. As I learn more about the faith and journeys of others, I have in turn been prompted to learn more about myself. This happens most frequently when I am asked questions that I do not know the answers to! Because of my limited knowledge of Arabic, I am often prompted by these questions to consult secondary sources and commentaries of relevant passages to find a response.⁴

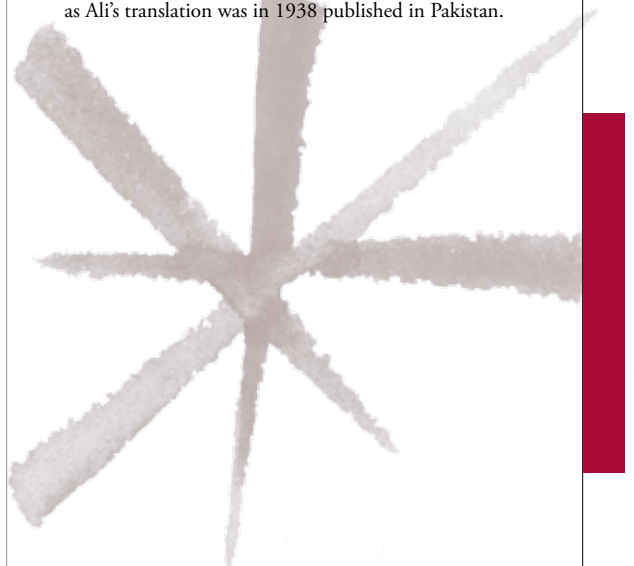
Surah Ar-Rahman talks about all of creation and all the blessings God provides—from the perfect balance of nature, to the trees that will greet us in heaven. Beginning with the thirteenth verse, and successively after almost every other verse, this chapter includes the repeating refrain: “Then which of the favors of your Lord will ye deny?”⁵ At first I understood this question to refer back to all of the gifts of creation and the heavens that are mentioned in the alternating verses. However, upon further study and reflection, this question became one that I could apply to any and every part of my life. Everything is a blessing; which of these blessings will I deny? During my time at Santa Clara, I have had the honor of cultivating friendships with people I would have never imagined possible. Having a respectful

relationship with someone who does not share your most fundamental and central beliefs can be challenging, but it is also inspiring and encouraging. Because of our differences, we are compelled to encounter one another with a deeper level of love and respect. Surah Ar-Rahman offers a framework for my engagement with the world, and for my relationships in the world. As I continue my journey at Santa Clara and beyond, I am excited to see the development of my faith within the framework of the Qur’an, asking myself, “Then which of the favors of your Lord will ye deny?” ©

SEHER SIDDIQEE is a junior Religious Studies and Psychology major at Santa Clara University and serves as the Interfaith Intern in the Campus Ministry Department. When she graduates, Siddiqee is planning to pursue the Islamic Chaplaincy Program at the Macdonald Center for the Study of Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations at Hartford Seminary in Connecticut.

NOTES

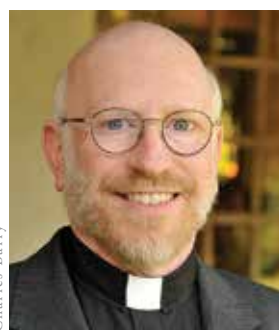
- 1 Hans Wehr, *Arabic-English Dictionary* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1993).
- 2 Surah Rahman is the 55th chapter in the Qur’an.
- 3 By typing Surah Rahman into a search engine, you may hear a recitation online.
- 4 These invitations to learn more about my own tradition and my place within it led me, in part, to participate in the summer Arabic Language Intensive Program between my sophomore and junior years at Santa Clara.
- 5 *The Glorious Qur’an*, trans. Abdullah Yusuf Ali (United States: Library of Congress, 1977). This may be incomplete as Ali’s translation was in 1938 published in Pakistan.



An Oddly Satisfying Sacred Text

“Go Forth and Teach: The Characteristics of Jesuit Education”

INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION ON THE APOSTOLATE OF JESUIT EDUCATION (1986)



Charles Barry

**BY THOMAS
MASSARO, S.J.**

*Dean, Jesuit School of Theology,
Santa Clara University*

CAN A SACRED TEXT BE WRITTEN BY COMMITTEE? CAN A SACRED TEXT ARISE DURING A DECADE KNOWN MORE FOR DISCO AND WINE COOLERS THAN RELIGIOUS DEVOTION? CAN A WRITING THAT CONSISTS MOSTLY OF NUMBERED BULLET POINTS QUALIFY AS A SACRED TEXT?

I am wagering on an affirmative answer to each of those questions.

You don't often hear anyone mention a Jesuit document called "Go Forth and Teach: The Characteristics of Jesuit Education." I may qualify as its biggest fan, but I hope I am not the only one who appreciates its rich contribution. For my money, it deserves a much higher profile in conversations about the educational enterprise in general, and the mission of Jesuits and their colleagues, more specifically, on campuses like Santa Clara University.

The document (generally referred to simply as "Characteristics") was published by the International Commission on the Apostolate of Jesuit Education, in 1986. That year marked the 400th anniversary of the *Ratio Studiorum* (1586), a landmark set of pedagogical principles that long guided the system of Jesuit education. For centuries, teachers and administrators have looked to the *Ratio* for practical advice as well as inspiration for their noble mission of education.

The Jesuit Father General at the time of the publication of the *Characteristics*, Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, explicitly noted that the 1986 document is not intended to serve as a new *Ratio*, but, like its predecessor, "It can give us a common mission and a common sense of purpose; it can be a standard against which we measure ourselves."¹ Father Kolvenbach affirms in a cover letter that accompanies the document that it is intended not only for Jesuits but also



Holly Schapker, *Weaving*, 96 x 60 inches, mixed media, 2010. Produced as a part of the Xavier University commissioned series ADSUM: Contemporary Paintings on Ignatian Spirituality. Used with permission.

for all religious and lay people who collaborate with Jesuits in educational apostolates. Further, although the Characteristics document primarily focuses on the renewal of secondary education, its content is clearly applicable for all levels of Jesuit-sponsored education.

Whether one is concerned about the success of Nativity schools, Christo Rey-style secondary education, Jesuit-sponsored high schools or colleges and universities, the document is extremely useful for the task of what we Jesuits call *apostolic discernment*. Just as Saint Ignatius of Loyola emphasized individual and interior *spiritual discernment* in his Spiritual Exercises, we who follow the Jesuit founder at a distance of five hundred years do well constantly to ask challenging questions about our collective and external activities. Are we who truly love these schools proceeding in the best possible way, with maximum effectiveness and fidelity to the

mission? Are we still on the right track, or could our efforts benefit from a renewal or course adjustment? The Characteristics document is a tool that allows educators to conduct a collective institutional inventory, an examination of conscience writ large, if you will.

To help address such questions, which arise in every age and every culture where Jesuits and their colleagues educate, the document presents a series of 28 marks of Jesuit education. There is no substitute for citing this list in full:

Jesuit education . . .

1. Is world-affirming
2. Assists in the total formation of each individual within the human community
3. Includes a religious dimension that permeates the entire education
4. Is an apostolic instrument
5. Promotes dialogue between faith and culture

6. Insists on individual care and concern for each person
7. Emphasizes activity on the part of the student in the learning process
8. Encourages life long openness to growth
9. Is value-oriented
10. Encourages a realistic knowledge, love and acceptance of self
11. Provides a realistic knowledge of the world in which we live
12. Proposes Christ as the model of human life
13. Provides adequate pastoral care
14. Celebrates faith in personal and community prayer, worship and service
15. Is preparation for active life commitment
16. Serves the faith that does justice
17. Seeks to form “men and women for others”
18. Manifests a particular concern for the poor
19. Is an apostolic instrument, in service of the church as it serves human society
20. Prepares students for active participation in the Church and the local community, for the service of others
21. Pursues excellence in its work of formation
22. Witnesses to excellence
23. Stresses lay-Jesuit collaboration
24. Relies on a spirit of community among teaching staff and administrators, the Jesuit community, governing boards, parents, former students, benefactors
25. Takes place within a structure that promotes community
26. Adapts means and methods in order to achieve its purposes most effectively
27. Is a “system” of schools with a common vision and common goals
28. Assists in providing the professional training and ongoing formation that is needed, especially for teachers.

Except for twenty brief paragraphs of introductory material, a one-page conclusion, and two appendices, this list of 28 characteristics forms the skeletal outline of the entire document. The items are clustered together and amplified with a few paragraph of description relating to each.

Readers familiar with things Jesuit will have no challenge at all matching many of these 28 items to concerns expressed in the course of the history of the Society of Jesus. The promotion

of dialogue between faith and culture (item 5) is a major theme of the documents that came out of General Congregation 34 in 1995. The 16th item among the Characteristics places in a nutshell the clarion call for serious attention to the relationship of faith and justice issued by General Congregation 32 in 1974–75. Pedro Arrupe, who served as General of the Society from 1965 to 1981, gets a shout-out in item 17, as he was responsible for popularizing the phrase “men and women for others.” The importance of *cura personalis* (care and concern for each individual, cited in item six), dating from the Jesuit Constitutions, has been a constant motif of Jesuit life and apostolic initiatives. Those who wrote this document in 1986 were by no means pretending to invent any of these themes whole-

*Can a text that is so
susceptible to charges
of being derivative
and unoriginal still be
considered sacred?*

cloth, but were deliberately weaving together familiar strands to create an elegant tapestry.

Can a text that is so susceptible to charges of being derivative and unoriginal still be considered sacred? My affirmative answer to this question is grounded in my strong conviction that this document is by no means a static summary of so many previous themes and imperatives, but a truly dynamic and inspiring agenda for ongoing improvement. Consider, for example, item 18. Sure, it is easy to give perfunctory assent to the principle that Jesuit education should be particularly concerned for the poor, but take a moment to ponder what that might mean in various corners of the world today and what a huge challenge this commitment amounts to. Will Jesuit provinces in rich and poor countries alike steward their precious resources in the quite risky ways that will be required to increase access of low-income people to Jesuit education? Will the Jesuits in the United States, as just one example, continue to experiment creatively with new delivery

models (such as the Cristo Rey and Nativity schools), even if this means forgoing further commitments of manpower and energy to more traditional schools that tend to serve the more affluent sectors of society? How should we think about priorities and opportunity costs?

A quarter-century now after its publication, the Characteristics document remains a source of inspiration because it continues to address and open up pivotal questions like these. Making a valiant stand against any temptation to cut corners or settle into apathy, this document reminds its readers, Jesuit educators and many others as well, of our common rootedness in a long and living tradition of educational excellence. Reinforcing this illuminating linkage of past and future, its two appendices make an effort to describe the distinctive Ignatian worldview and spiritual vision that is reflected in the 28 characteristics.

In my judgment, what makes this document sacred, rather than merely useful, is its implicit awareness that excellent education in the Jesuit tradition is not merely an achievement, but ultimately a process—an open-ended and never completed quest to live out the full potential of what we have inherited. The document begs to be engaged in a critical way and updated for new times and in the full range of cultures where Jesuit education finds itself. It has certainly helped ground my work in the past 25 years in Jesuit high schools, colleges, and particularly in two graduate theology centers.

The Characteristics document remains one of the great treasures of the Jesuit tradition that I am proud to share with all my colleagues and the publics with which I work.

Not bad at all for a bullet-pointed committee document. [e](#)

THOMAS MASSARO, S.J., is Dean of the Jesuit School of Theology of Santa Clara University. A member of the New England Province of the Society of Jesus, he holds a doctorate in Christian social ethics from Emory University and taught Moral Theology for 15 years at the Boston College School of Theology and Ministry and its predecessor, Weston Jesuit School of Theology in Cambridge. He has published numerous articles and seven books, including three editions of the popular classroom text *Living Justice: Catholic Social Teaching in Action*.

NOTES

- 1 Peter Hans Kolvenbach, “Letter to All Major Superiors,” (Rome) 8 December 1986. This quotation comes from Kolvenbach’s letter accompanying “The Characteristics of Jesuit Education.” (1986).

Panelists from left to right: Eileen Elrod, vice provost for Faculty Development, Thane Kreiner, executive director, Center for Science, Technology and Society, Kirk Hanson, executive director, Markkula Center for Applied Ethics, Jeanne Rosenberger, vice provost for Student Life, and Donald Polden, dean, School of Law.



Grace Ogihara

Sikh Scripture and Inter-Religious Community

*“O Nanak, He Himself creates them and makes them different.
Who shall we say is bad for all have the same Master.”*

GURU GRANTH SAHIB (1237)



BY SUKHMANDER SINGH

*Professor, Department of
Civil Engineering,
Santa Clara University*


WHEN I JOINED THE SANTA CLARA UNIVERSITY FACULTY IN 1986, I WAS FULL OF MIXED FEELINGS. I WAS EXCITED TO TEACH AT THIS REPUTABLE SCHOOL THAT EXCELS IN TEACHING THE WHOLE PERSON, BUT WAS APPREHENSIVE ABOUT HOW A PERSON LIKE ME, WHO IS NOT ONLY A NON-CATHOLIC BUT CULTURALLY AND VISIBLY DIFFERENT, WOULD FIT INTO THIS ENVIRONMENT. MY APPREHENSION SOON EVAPORATED. Santa Clara’s Jesuit tradition of education promotes mutual respect and tolerance for all members of the community. I felt relieved as I discovered that there is no conflict in being a good Sikh, a good American, and a good teacher at a Jesuit school. My Sikh tradition enjoins me to hard work and sharing and caring in the name of God Almighty for the establishment of a just society for all humankind. A deeper look into the *Guru Granth Sahib*, the teaching of my sacred scripture, further reinforced my realization that I could belong within a

Jesuit university and participate in a shared commitment towards the betterment of all humanity.

The Sikh scriptures, the *Guru Granth Sahib*, were compiled by the founders, known as “Gurus” of the Sikh religion over a period of some 230 years (1478-1708). There are two unique features of this sacred scripture. First, it is primarily a collection of devotional hymns. All hymns are set in musical verse to sing to the glory of God, with universal brotherhood/sisterhood, harmony, tolerance, humility, and truthfulness as central themes. Second, throughout the hymns of the *Guru Granth Sahib* the emphasis is placed on the equality of all peoples regardless of religion, race, gender, or class. In fact, the scriptures contain not only the hymns of Sikh Gurus (the founders), but also the hymns and writings of God-devotees from other faiths. Since it was collated, dictated, edited, proofread and signed for authenticity by the founder Gurus themselves, and the original and the final copy is preserved in India, the authenticity of this holy scripture has never been

in doubt; the entire contents of Sikh scriptures are held with great reverence by all in the community. Thus, in so far as Sikhs accept their scriptures as revelatory, we cannot believe that one race or religion is better than others. Rather, Sikhs accept all faiths as part of God's creation. Consider the teaching of Siri Guru Granth Sahib: "Don't say the Vedas and the Books (Torah, Bible, Qur'an) are false. False is the one who does not study them."¹ And "Who can we call bad or good when all are Your creatures?"²

According to an underlying message of *Guru Granth Sahib*, God created all and abides in all. God is the common father/mother and we should see God pervading everything and everyone. The *Guru Granth Sahib* is inherently committed to religious harmony and cooperation. In fact, Sikh temples, known as Gurdwara, have always been open to all, regardless of one's religious commitment. Because of this teaching and practice in the Sikh tradition, when I arrived at Santa Clara, I began to join most of the gatherings in the Mission Church. What a peaceful and loving atmosphere I felt when inside! When I gathered with other members of the Santa Clara community there, some of the teachings and reflections from my own scriptures would flash across my mind. Since the *Guru Granth Sahib* is largely a collection of devotional hymns which are set in musical verse to sing the glory of God, I found the music inside the church resonant and uplifting. Furthermore, since the Sikh scripture contains not only the hymns of Sikh Gurus (the founder teachers), but also the writings and hymns of God-devotees from other faiths, I found deep consolation whenever I would hear our then President, Fr. Paul Locatelli, S.J., speak publicly about the many ways in which Santa Clara is committed to religious harmony and cooperation. I have been shown no discrimination on the basis of my race and religion. My whole person has been welcomed here. In fact, in the School of Engineering, I was repeatedly and unanimously asked by my department faculty and the dean of the School of Engineering to lead the Department of Civil Engineering, and I remained department chair for fifteen years. During this time, I put my heart and soul into the development of the

department. I added a structural engineering lab, an environmental lab, and a design and analysis room, and I raised money to add to the existing concrete lab and strength of materials labs. In collaboration with others, I also expanded the department's offerings by hiring additional faculty to offer wider and higher levels of education to our civil engineering students. All of this was possible because Santa Clara allowed me to remain grounded in my own identity and commitments as a Sikh, practicing my faith and the moral and ethical values I am committed to uphold, while inviting me to realize my faith and identity through the University's mission to educate "leaders of competence, conscience and compassion...building a more humane, just and sustainable world."³ 



Harmandir Sahib is the Sikh Gurdwara in Punjab, India that houses the Guru Granth Sahib. The four entry doors of the Harmandir Sahib symbolize the openness of Sikhs towards all people and religions.

SUKHMANDER SINGH studied at Punjabi University (B.S.), Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Delhi (M.S.), and University of California at Berkeley (Ph.D.). He is a Professor of Civil Engineering and a holder of the Nicolson Family Endowed Chair in Engineering at Santa Clara University.

NOTES

1. Guru Granth Sahib, 1350. Translations of Guru Granth Sahib in English, French, Spanish, Punjabi, Hindu, Sindhi & German are available. More recently, the text in its original font is available electronically on many websites. For more information contact SGPC, Amritsar, India.
2. Guru Granth Sahib, 383.
3. See Santa Clara University Vision Statement at <http://www.scu.edu/jesuit/University-Mission.cfm>

My Reflections on MLK’s “Letter from Birmingham Jail”:

A Letter to Amara and Anissa

“Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.”
MARTIN LUTHER KING JR., “Letter from Birmingham Jail” (1963)



BY LESTER DEANES
*Assistant Dean,
Office of Student Life,
Santa Clara University*

WHEN ANISSA AND AMARA, MY TWIN DAUGHTERS, WERE BORN, MY THOUGHTS ABOUT WHY I WORK IN STUDENT AFFAIRS IN JESUIT HIGHER EDUCATION FOREVER CHANGED. I WANT MY DAUGHTERS TO KNOW THAT I LEAVE THEM EVERY DAY BECAUSE THE WORK I DO SPEAKS FOR MY SOUL. MY WORK REFLECTS WHO I AM, AND THIS IS THE LIFE I PRAY THEY WILL HAVE SOMEDAY TOO. And yet, by the time Anissa and Amara are in college, I fear the world will not have changed enough. I am terrified by the biases and discrimination I see in my students and in the implicit biases I struggle to address within myself. I wonder if my daughters will still face injustice because of their mixed race, because of their gender, because . . .

In his 1963 “Letter from Birmingham Jail,” Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. writes: “Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.”¹ I chose Dr. King’s letter as my sacred text because

it has become a significant resource and tool in my struggle against injustice. Dr. King asks his fellow clergy, and all his readers today: Will you stand with me? Is my struggle your struggle . . . our struggle? In our applications of Dr. King’s teaching in our life and work, we are called to address discrimination in multiple “anywheres” and “everywheres.” Our mutual concern for one another requires a shared vigilance to address personal and structural injustice. As the world continues to change, new challenges and different communities move to the margins. Every form of injustice affects us all, and we must stand with one another in order to make a more just world as fellow children of God.

In reexamining Dr. King’s “Letter from Birmingham Jail” within the context of my work in Jesuit higher education, a number of themes emerge: the importance of finding connection with others, an expanded vision of social justice to include multiple identity frames, and the importance of challenging the status quo as a



Amara and Anissa Deanes at one month.

necessary step in interrupting oppressive systems. Student Affairs at a Jesuit university is, at its core, rooted in the principles articulated during the Civil Rights Movement.

FINDING CONNECTIONS WITH OTHERS

The theme of discerning connections with others is set out at the start of Dr. King's "Letter from Birmingham Jail." He begins by stating his purpose for being in Alabama: "I am in Birmingham because injustice is here . . . 'thus saith the Lord,' far beyond the boundaries . . . so am I compelled to carry the gospel of freedom beyond my own hometown. Like Paul, I must constantly respond to the Macedonian call for aid."² As a student affairs practitioner, Dr. King's reflections call me to care for and be concerned with those beyond my "hometown"—regardless of their community membership. Outside a student's academic pursuits, there is no greater purpose in Jesuit higher education than empowering students to find their connections within and beyond their root communities and subcommunities. And there is an inherent synergy between these expanding layers of interconnectedness and social justice.

In order for social justice to exist, there must be some level of caring for or connection with "the other." In the context of my work in student affairs in Jesuit higher education, "the other" can mean any perspective or social identity beyond one's own. Laws alone cannot create a just society. Attitudes and perspectives must shift to create lasting change. I have led various diversity workshops for hundreds of students at Santa Clara University and beyond. As a facilitator, I have learned that the best chance to change a student's perspective comes from hearing his or her peers speak out of their different experiences. There is great power in creating opportunities for students to share across their diverse experiences. Lasting change comes from connecting minds and hearts, from sharing values and experiences, and from genuine dialogue. Although it is not a simple task, dialogue serves as a catalyst for transformative change; it has the power to create the peace for which so many of us are searching. Personally, there are a number of perspectives that deeply challenge my own faith and values, but Dr. King's letter reminds me to seek out places of dialogue; it is only in making room to be connected with "the other" that I become whole and authentic myself.

AN EXPANDED VISION OF SOCIAL JUSTICE

I wonder what Dr. King would say about our current struggles in the United States and around the globe. Issues of racism, sexism, and classism often dominate public discourse, and yet the topic of public conversation regularly shifts to accommodate the next great tragedy. Pathways toward transformative change are challenging; they require a sustained commitment to dialogue. I think Dr. King would be disappointed with our progress.

In the past 50 years, communities on the margins have shifted to include those struggling with issues of nationality, disability,



Courtesy of Susannah Heschel

Selma, Alabama Civil Rights March, 1965 with Representative John Lewis, Ralph Abernathy, Martin Luther King, Jr., Ralph Bunche, Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel, and Rev. Fred Shuttlesworth.

sexual orientation, and socioeconomic status. Santa Clara University's mission and vision statement is centered on the creation of a "more humane, just, and sustainable world."³ As a Jesuit institution, we must ask ourselves if we are providing the support needed to ensure that all students, faculty, staff, administrators, and community members are able to thrive. Dr. King's letter illustrates an expanded vision of social justice; his concern and commitment extends to those of multiple and diverse communities. "I am cognizant of the interrelatedness of all communities and states."⁴

In student affairs, we regularly talk with our students about the interrelatedness of multiple social and communal identity frames, such as

gender, sexual orientation, faith, body image, age, nationality, disability, and socioeconomic status. I often ask myself and my students to consider which perspectives, communities, or voices are missing from their circles and conversations. On a daily basis I'm challenged by this concept and I'm also challenged by the ways many of my students engage those of other faiths, cultures, and traditions. I feel called to encourage my students to apply this concept of interrelatedness to their everyday interactions with others; to think critically about the significance of their behavior in and outside the classroom. Students should consider other communities and social identities when selecting a Halloween costume, or the language they use to describe others on social media. Dr. King calls us to expand our perspective of community to include those on and outside the margins. In order to be congruent in our faith and community values, we must practice the principles of social justice in *all* spaces and places of our lives.

CHALLENGING THE STATUS QUO

The last theme that emerges for me through my reflections on Dr. King's "Letter from Birmingham Jail" is his commitment to challenging the status quo. Democracy is rooted in and responsive to action. Silence and passivity have never moved a democracy to be concerned about the marginalized. Rather, "Injustice must be rooted out by strong, persistent, and determined action."⁵

But "strong, persistent, and determined" action takes coalition building. In his "Letter from Birmingham Jail," Dr. King highlights all the committed individuals and institutions actively working alongside him in the Civil Rights Movement. "Letter from Birmingham Jail" took on new meaning for me when I rediscovered that Dr. King congratulated Spring Hill College, a Jesuit institution, for their efforts to desegregate well before other colleges and universities in the South. In fact, Spring Hill College was the only college to desegregate for 10 years in the South.⁶

Spring Hill College thus serves as an example for the active role Jesuit universities can play in fighting injustice. Spring Hill College

Spring Hill College thus serves as an example for the active role Jesuit universities can play in fighting injustice. Spring Hill College challenged the status quo not because it was easy or popular but because it was just. These actions showed a genuine willingness to stand in solidarity with those on the margins without concern for personal or institutional gain.

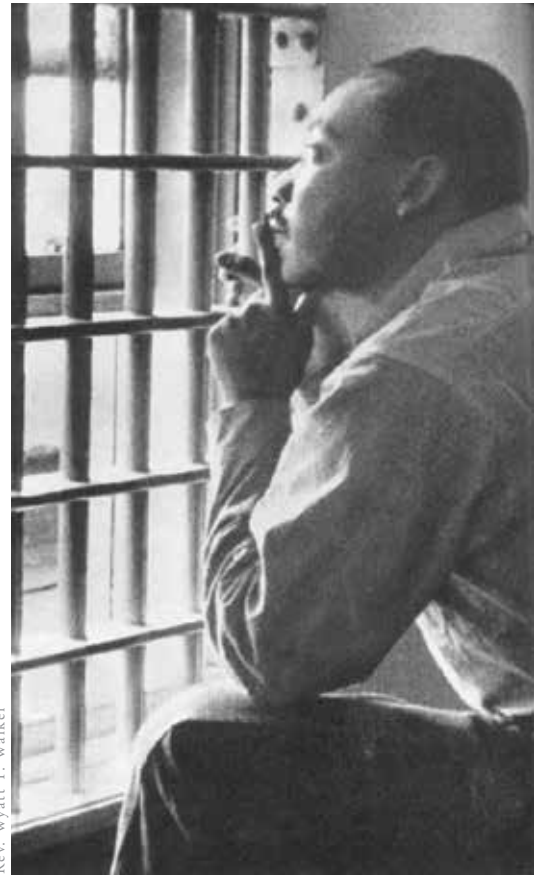
challenged the status quo not because it was easy or popular but because it was just. These actions showed a genuine willingness to stand in solidarity with those on the margins without concern for personal or institutional gain. The leadership demonstrated by the Spring Hill College community should not be forgotten and continues to impact generations of students. I have a profound sense of gratitude that another Jesuit institution was willing to be the first to take that critical step for justice.⁷

I am equally proud of the steps my own institution, Santa Clara University, has taken to support undocumented students, both the emotional and financial support of the Jesuit community, as well as the University's advocacy efforts toward immigration reform. However, we have a long way to go.

We must ask, as a community that strives for social justice, are any of our policies or traditions adversely impacting our community members? We should consider reviewing our policy regarding domestic partners living on campus in the residence halls. If we do not explicitly recognize these partnerships, the quality of life for on-campus professional faculty and staff is compromised and our campus community becomes less than welcoming for the LGBTQ community.

Injustice is a disease that can infect all of us, and the only cure is genuine dialogue and a willingness and commitment to stand with the marginalized. Through genuine dialogue, I have been able to unpack and examine the places in my life where I have oppressed others, an

intense but hugely important emotional process of exposing my vulnerabilities. Likewise, Dr. King's letter challenges our students, faculty, staff, administrators, and alumni to consider these questions: Did you seek to make a connection today with your fellow community members? Did you engage in genuine dialogue




Rev. Wyatt T. Walker

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. in Birmingham Jail.

Courtesy of Lester Deanes



Anissa and Amara at six months.

with someone different from yourself? Did you challenge what was unjust in the status quo? I hope when my daughters read this essay, they will understand how much I love them and the work I do. I work at Santa Clara University because I am challenged on a daily basis to be more and to do more for the students and communities we serve. We cannot be leaders in immigration rights and not be leaders in gender equity; support for underrepresented students, and leaders in advocacy for students with disabilities. More is required of us. Meeting legal requirements or measuring up to our peer institutions is not enough. *Magis*. More is required of me if I am going to be the role model and example my children need. Instead of settling for the status quo, we must engage in the ever messy, ever ongoing dialogue required to form a just community. 

LESTER DEANES is an Assistant Dean for Student Life at Santa Clara University, where he is responsible for engaging staff, faculty, and students to promote an inclusive campus community. His higher education research interests are in first-year students, students of color, and first-generation college students.

NOTES

- 1 Martin Luther King Jr., “Letter from Birmingham Jail, 1963,” in *Martin Luther King Jr., Malcolm X, and the Civil Rights Struggle of the 1950s and 1960s: A Brief History with Documents*, ed. David Howard-Pitney (New York: Bedford/ St. Martin’s, 2004), 75.
- 2 Ibid.
- 3 See Santa Clara University vision statement: <http://www.scu.edu/jesuit/University-Mission.cfm>
- 4 MLK, 75.
- 5 Ibid, 85.
- 6 Spring Hill College, (n.d.) *About SHC: History of Spring Hill College*, <http://www.shc.edu/about/history-spring-hill-college> (January 16, 2013).
- 7 MLK, 86.

LOOKING AHEAD

2013-14 Bannan Institute: What Good is God?

In an age in which religion is associated as much with violence as benevolence, where propositions of faith are often framed as oppositional to modern science, and one-fifth of all Americans self-identify as “none of the above” with regard to religion, the 2013-14 Bannan Institute will publicly engage one of the most significant questions of our time: What Good Is God?

Through a series of lectures and facilitated dialogues with scientists, philosophers, literary scholars, engineers, theologians, poets, and educators, the 2013-14 Bannan Institute will explore the significance of secular and religious culture in civil society (fall quarter); consider the questions and resources of emergent scientific, technological, and religious paradigms (winter quarter); and host a public conversation around the role of religious studies within institutions of higher education (spring quarter).

The yearlong Bannan Institutes are made possible through the generosity of the Bannan family endowment. [e](#)

For more information on these upcoming events and lectures, visit scu.edu/ic.

Barbara Callow Calligraphy

NEW: Thriving Neighbors Initiative in San Jose

In Fall 2013 the Ignatian Center for Jesuit Education, on behalf of Santa Clara University, will launch a Place-based Initiative that will promote strategic ties between the University and the Greater Washington Community and surrounding neighborhoods of San Jose. The Initiative will advance prosperity and education of both SCU students and neighborhood students as whole persons in whole communities.

The Greater Washington Community is one of the most socioeconomically challenged regions of Santa Clara County. Families face significant barriers that impede their ability to live healthy and productive lives. It is also home to a vibrant community with a significant immigrant population, strong community-based organizations, and seasoned community leaders who have much to teach our campus community.

To reduce barriers to higher education and prosperity and enhance educational opportunities for Santa Clara University students, the Ignatian Center will establish a center of engagement to support the needs of students and their families residing in

the Greater Washington Community and surrounding neighborhoods.

A secondary, but equally important emphasis of the Center is to foster a quality education for SCU students that is in alignment with the Jesuit educational mission. Overall, the Center will focus on engagement and educational opportunities in order to strengthen the community and facilitate a college-going culture.

To learn more, or donate to this exciting new initiative, please contact Emily Shoemaker, director of external relations at 408-551-7176 or email eshoemaker@scu.edu. [e](#)



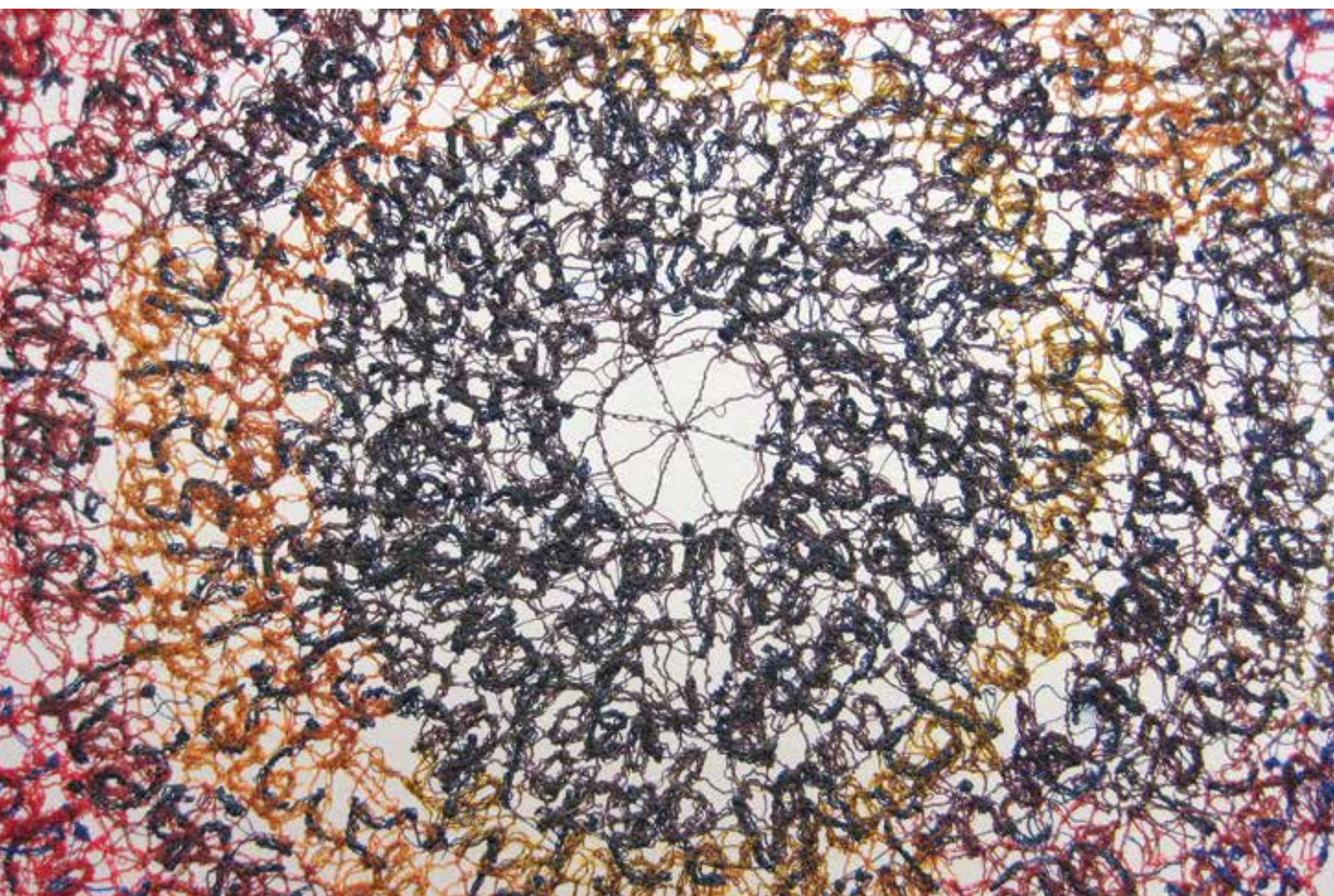
Charles Barry

SCU student engaging with Washington Elementary School students in Fall 2012.

Santa Clara University
The Ignatian Center for Jesuit Education
500 El Camino Real
Santa Clara, CA 95053-0454

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explore
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Cari Ferraro

Lisa Kokin, *Transcript (Kaddish)*, (detail), thread, stabilizer, 2010. Courtesy of the artist and Seager Gray Gallery.

This piece was featured in *Dialoguing with Sacred Texts: An Exhibit of Sacred Texts Past, Present, and Future*, sponsored by the Ignatian Center for Jesuit Education and Archives and Special Collections, Santa Clara University. The exhibit hosted the work of 15 contemporary artists working in a variety of media to engage the unfolding dynamic of sacred texts, as well as ancient and contemporary sacred books and objects from diverse traditions and contexts. This issue of *explore* features several pieces from the exhibit.